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BEGINNER'S TIPS FOR MARKERS AND INKS

HOW TO BE A

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Learn new art techniques from leading industry artists.
PLUS! How Daniel Dociu's team created **Guild Wars**



Cover art by Hyojin Ahn
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Welcome...
to new artistic horizons



Do you dream of being paid to paint? The artists working in video games are simply some of the best in the business. It's not easy – painting to unrelenting deadlines and briefs, under pressure from game publishers to deliver something new, and aiming to meet gamers' high expectations – but the rewards are high. You'll get to work with some of the best artists in the world (some of whom may be your idols), your day job is doing something that you love and what you create will potentially reach the homes of millions.

This edition of ImagineFX has gathered video games' finest artists to share their wealth of experience and knowledge with you. First up, we're always happy to share the visual delights that come out of Kekai Kotaki, Daniel Dociu and others at ArenaNet. Turn to page 46 to see how they piece together their stunning world we know as Guild Wars, and why Kekai had an unusual thirst for honey...

Robh Ruppel, Luke Mancini, Kevin Chen and Daryl Mandryk head up our step-by-step video game guidance in our Workshop section and you'll no doubt be inspired by Chesley award-winning Lucas Graciano's artistic journey on page 60.

Even if you're not looking to work in games, the artistic know-how on display here will help you in your quest to improve. Oh, and if reading ImagineFX has helped you attain a new level of skill in your painting – no matter how large or small – or if it's aided you in getting your dream college placement or job, let us know.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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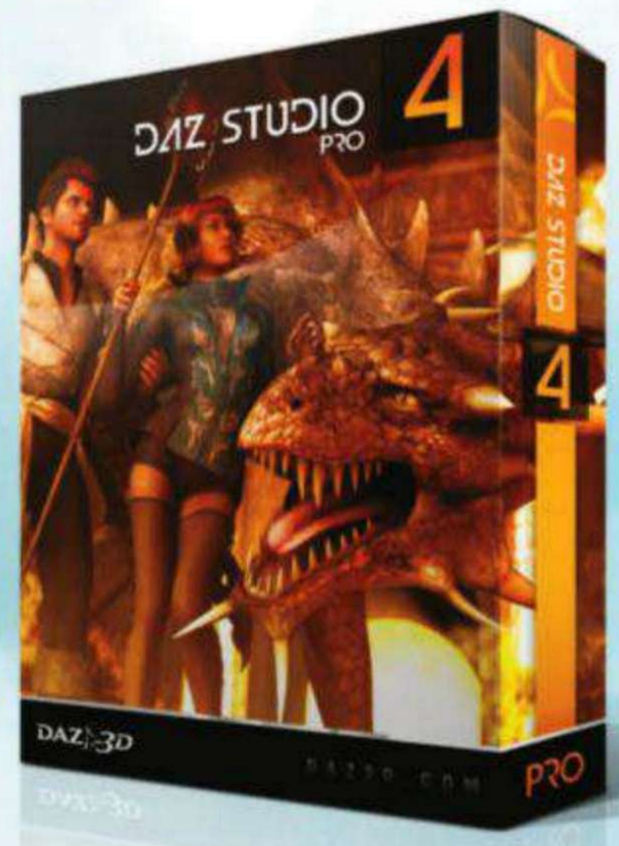
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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX

Cover artist

Korean fine art meets western video game design in Hyojin Ahn's imaginative Guild Wars 2 heroine. A perfect match for our game art issue



Hyojin Ahn

COUNTRY: Korea
SOFTWARE: Photoshop
WEB: thefirstcolor.com

After majoring in fine arts at Korea's Chung-Ang University, Hyojin started working in the video games industry, and has been a concept artist, art director and illustrator for games as varied as Lineage 2 and Zero Gravity. He's now a key part of NCsoft's global art team working on Guild Wars 2, from which our cover image Evil Sylvari is taken.



Turn to page 46 for more art from the Guild Wars artists!

Portfolio

More stunning images by our cover artist…



The detail Hyojin paints into his character designs enables him to tell the hero's backstory in subtle ways. This design for the Svanir Norn class from Guild Wars 2 features ice and dragon details that make known the character's association with the Elder Dragon Jormag.



Working on the Norn race for Guild Wars 2, Hyojin took the blueprint of a nomadic, barbarian race inspired by Viking legends and gave the female warrior armour a new elegance while retaining the angular lines and motifs of the Guild Wars style.



Standard Norn fighters are armoured, nine-foot tall warriors who, in Guild Wars 2, have the ability to transform into giant bears. This design is for a lightly armoured character who, judging by the details present on her costume, can turn into a fast-moving wolf.

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX

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Reader FXPosé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



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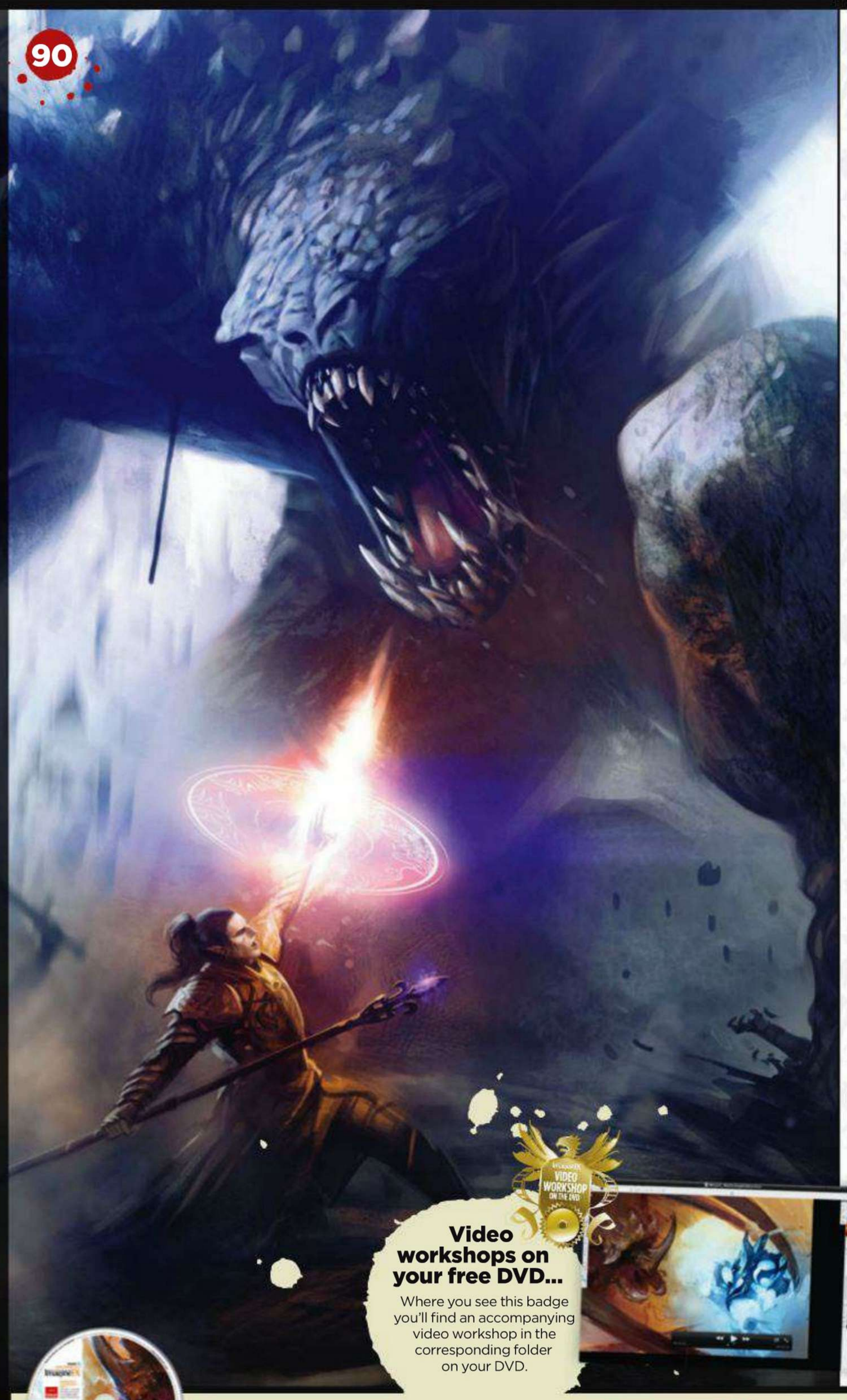


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Paint feeding carnivores, water splashes and decals for armour, advice for using markers and inks, how to depict a female face, draw an owl, and lots more!





Video workshops on your free DVD...
Where you see this badge you'll find an accompanying video workshop in the corresponding folder on your DVD.

Turn to page 114 for more…

ON YOUR DVD

This month's essential art resources…



Video game model bundle
Put these 3D assets into your art

Create a 3D game asset
Design and paint a battleaxe



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Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Artist of the Month

Tony Foti

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"To be honest, I'm not sure what my younger self thought a career in art meant," says Tony, "but somewhere deep down I knew it involved putting my pyjamas back on after I showered." That was enough for Tony. Twenty years later, he landed his first job painting cards for the Warlord CCG.

Since then he's gone on to work for many of the companies that inspired him in the first place. "To this day I get that fuzzy feeling every time one of my witty, charming and attractive art directors drops an assignment in my inbox."

1 DEBRIS SPRAY "This one was a commission from Jon Schindehette at Wizards of the Coast. I won't begin to explain the compositional quagmire that is 'a whirlwind of debris', but dealing with all of the negative space issues turned out to be one of the most strangely difficult yet fun nights of my career."

2 SPECIAL AGENT CLARKSTONE "The thing I enjoyed the most about this card was how iconic it was. The Call of Cthulhu game is all about the mix of Lovecraft and film noir, and I can't think of a better subject than an FBI agent tangling with a tentacled beast."



ARTIST OF THE MONTH
Tony Foti wins himself a copy of Exotique 6 and Character Modeling 3. To find out more about these two indispensable art resources, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

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Artist crit

Creature design specialist Mark A Facey is wowed by the movement in Tony's Debris Spray



"Tony did a great job with this piece! His vibrant colour choices and fantastic sense of motion between the character and debris really bring the scene to life."

2



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Rodrigo Mendez
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter



Rodrigo is an aspiring fantasy and sci-fi artist, but due to the lack of educational facilities where he lives in Brazil, he's busy teaching himself. "However, I did graduate in Fine Arts at the Instituto Federal de Educação," he says, "a university in my home town of Benfica. It was there that I discovered digital art."

Rodrigo's ultimate aim is to work in the fields of illustration and concept art.

1 PROJECT MOTHER "This is a remake, of an old illustration of mine, which was done in Painter. The girl has some skills that are of interest to the men watching her. I tried to invoke something sinister, with dark colours playing with intense illumination."

2 DESPERATE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL "This piece illustrates one passage from my fantasy book The Winter Blades, which I'm currently working on. This is a tense moment when the giant readies his attack and Naithas (the hero) courageously stands still, ready to meet it."





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1



2



Margarete Lisakowski

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"As a teenager I was inspired by digital art when I bought my first Wacom tablet after studying media design," says Margarete. "I found myself on a long break from education where I just fell in love with the medium. I realised that painting is a part of my life that will always be there."

Enthused and encouraged by online forums and digital communities, since the end of 2009 she's been doing whatever it takes to gain experience and become a better artist, with a view of becoming a full-time illustrator.

1 CHERRY BLOSSOM GIRL
"After I visited a local Japanese garden, I was inspired to paint something that expresses the beauty of Japanese spring the way I see it. I tried to keep it simple, sweet and romantic. The shapes of the trees and clouds almost melt together and make it seem like the girl was surrounded by soft pink blossom clouds."

2 THE WATERNYMPH
"She's the spirit of the lake that's deep inside a mystic forest. The nymph dances, creates and is at one with everything around her."

3 THE WANDERER
"He's a lost prince on a long journey to find himself. Unimpressed by the beauty and magic of nature, he walks on, step by step. While painting this landscape I was thinking about how blindly most people go through their lives, without paying any attention to the little things in life that make it so special and worth living."

3



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1



Dan Marshall

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Dan has a traditional art background, with a degree in graphic arts and illustration being his cherry on the cake. "I work as a print-based graphic designer, and art has always been my passion," he says.

Dan says we have something to do with his recent career decision: "Since discovering digital painting after picking up a copy of ImagineFX, I feel like I've gone full circle and back to what I enjoyed doing so much while I was growing up – drawing and painting."

His ambition now is to break through into an industry where he can work as a full-time digital artist, be that concept art, character design or illustration.

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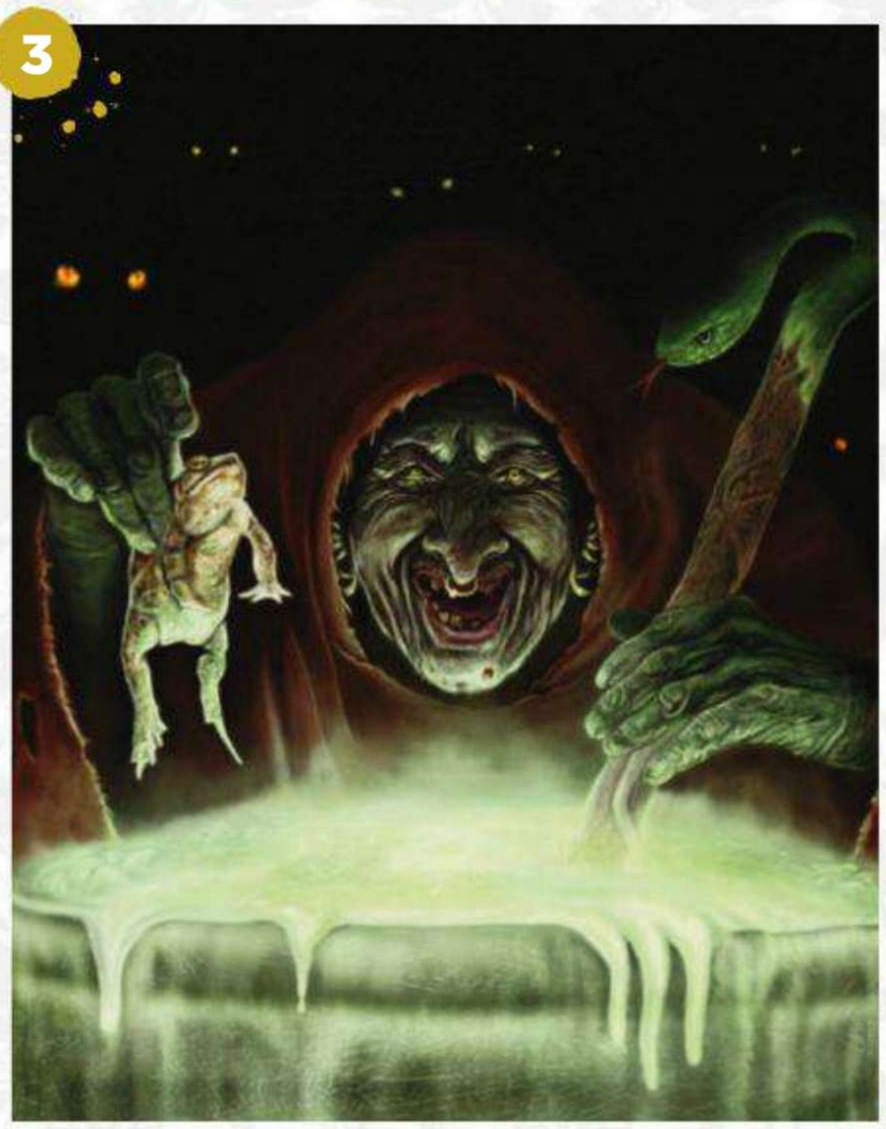


"Dan has an eye for good design. Whether it's the snakes echoing in his goddess's eye make-up and jewellery or his witch's gleeful expression as her potion takes shape, his characters grab your attention and hold it."
Ian Dean,
Deputy Editor

2



3



1 SNAKE GODDESS "This painting was produced for the ImagineFX reader cover art competition. Her name is Lewisia – the Snake Goddess. Snakes are drawn to her beauty and compete for her attention, while she draws energy from their strength and agility. The eyes of her snake jewellery glow when her powers are strongest."

2 RISE OF THE FALLEN "This image was inspired by the title of an ImagineFX challenge called Paradise Lost. I searched for the phrase online and found many images relating to Milton's epic poem, including those by great artists such as William Blake and Paul Gustave Doré. From my research, I concluded that I wanted to paint a picture of a fallen angel."

3 WITCH'S BREW "When I think of a witch, this is what I imagine... no animals were harmed in the making of this image! I was lucky enough to be approached by Lerner Books, which found my work on the internet, and as a result this image was used for the cover of Fantasy Chronicles: Wizards and Witches by Ann Kerns."

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1



Gabrielle Portal

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter



"My innate urge to doodle on napkins at a local Mexican restaurant somehow turned itself into a degree in fine arts and a career in illustration," says Gabrielle. X-Men comics were her first inspiration and you can still find her 1980 Wolverine Meltdown poster by Kent Williams hanging in her living room. "It was at school where I became obsessed with sci-fi and fantasy art," she says, "and where I met Jon Foster, who introduced me to Photoshop and Painter."

Gabrielle has since done illustrations for various RPGs and hopes to continue working in the sci-fi and fantasy art genre on book covers and concept art.

1 VIPER'S DAUGHTER "This is an illustration done for Fantasy Flight Games' A Game of Thrones. One of my favourite objects to paint is rich fabrics and folds. As a watercolourist, it's always in the back of my mind to try and recreate the beauty of the medium in my digital work. I tried a multitude of layered effects and techniques to achieve the texture in the grass and flowers before finally landing on this combination."

2 THE BIOLOGY STUDENT "Another piece for FFG, for Call of Cthulhu. I live down the street from HP Lovecraft's tombstone in the Blackstone Cemetery (in Rhode Island), so working on the game was a special treat. Plus, it gave me an excuse to go out and buy a life-size replica of a skull for reference (not that you'd actually need one)!"

3 ROKIJOU "This was perhaps the most fun I've ever had working on an illustration. I've had a long-time love affair with Japanese culture and art, particularly those relating to the Samurai. I used strong reference of traditional Japanese prints as the basis for this piece."

2



3



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Christoffer Björs
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



When he was still in school uniform, Christoffer became fascinated with video games. "I learned to use 3ds Max and started producing maps and 3D models inspired by the big games of the day," he says.

He found college just as inspiring: "I was introduced to 2D art, and graduated with a degree in art and media." 3D jobs were more prevalent than illustration ones, but Christoffer has stuck to his guns and is working from his apartment in Sweden as a freelance illustrator and concept artist, while keeping an eye out for in-house opportunities.

1 REST "A drawing set in the Warcraft universe that I made for BlizzCon 2010. A night elf druid rests peacefully in a quiet forest, perhaps not far from home. My choice of colours and the technique used were inspired by Jason Chan's work."

2 TRUE LOVE "This was painted with no reference at all, which is how I approach most of my work."

3 IMPACT "This was inspired by the Mayan prophecy that the world will end in 2012, but when I was at the sketching stage the earthquake hit Japan. The choice of title, as well as adding a ghost silhouette of a girl in a ponytail and short skirt, came from my sympathies for what's happening."

4 FIRE LADY "An image that was inspired by Frank Frazetta, most notably in the composition. I used a typical triangle set-up and decided to make everything in the painting point towards the woman."

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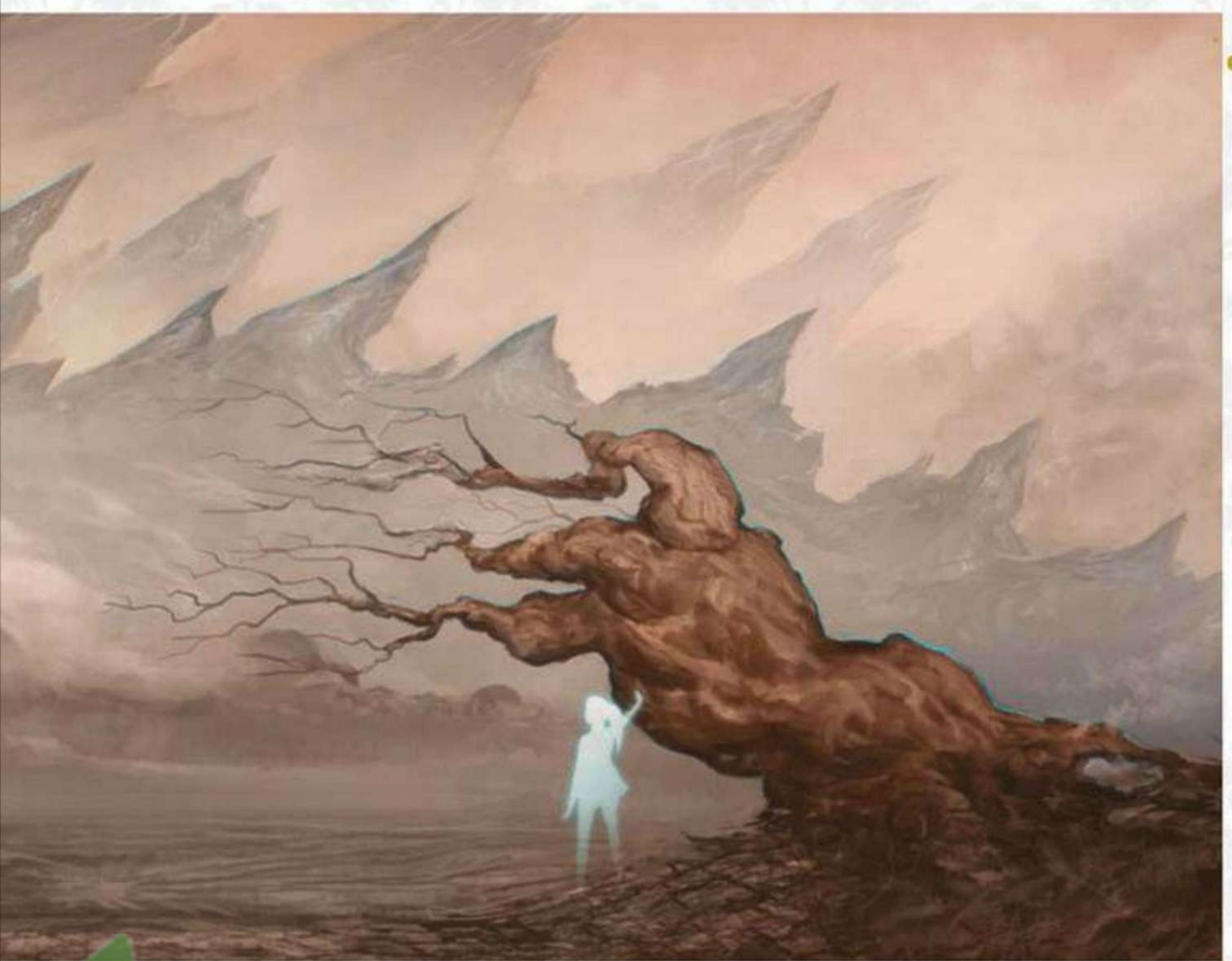
"There's a nice sense of intimacy in these paintings. From glimpsing arcane rituals to sharing a moment's rest on some grand quest, Christoffer is inviting us to ask questions about his female characters and their back-stories."
Paul Tysall,
Art Editor

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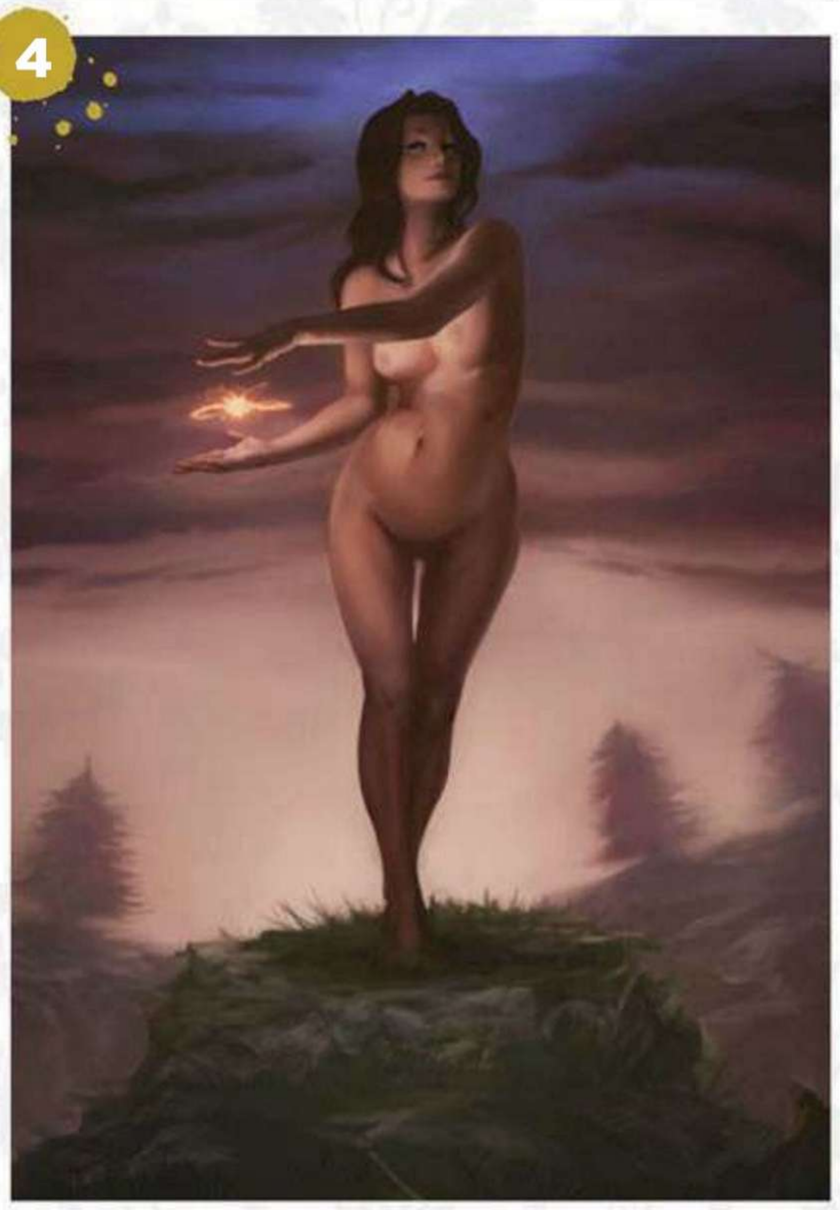
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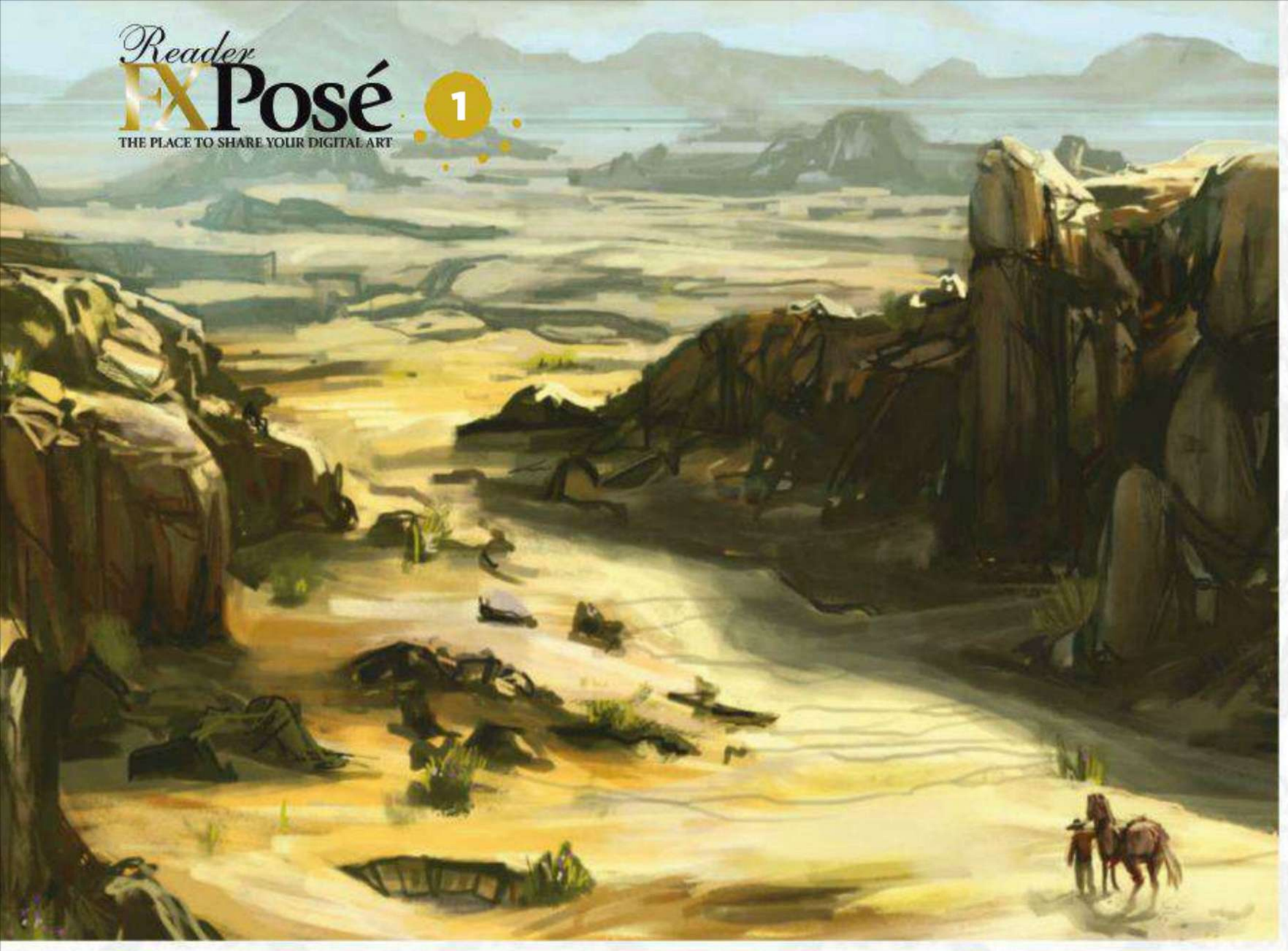
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Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

1



Stu Barnes
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Although Stu loved computer games as a kid, it was thinking about the artwork behind the games that really interested him. "I noticed that most of the artwork was being done in Photoshop and I wanted to learn how to do it," he says.

This led him to take a degree in graphic design, and he's since become inspired by his immediate surroundings. "I'm interested in landscape, since there is a huge variety of terrain in Utah to inspire me, and it's easy to add a fantasy twist out here when the land looks like the surface of Mars."

2



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Humans are secondary here, and with his use of small figures and travellers turning away, Stu offers the environments as the main characters. No wonder, since he has the expansive landscape of Utah on his doorstep for inspiration."
Beren Neale, Staff Writer

3



1 BADLANDS "I have a hard time imagining how the settlers made it through the West. This cowboy looks pretty tired. I wonder if he's going to make it out of the desert..."

2 AMBUSH "When you hike in the woods it's very quiet. Any loud noises will make you jump and put you on your guard. Usually it's nothing more than a bird."

3 IN THE WOODS "I like to use a lot of custom brushes, but sometimes I feel as though the brush is doing all of the work. I painted this image to see how far I could get with Photoshop's Standard Round brush."

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1



Bryan Maramag

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"3D was simply a tool I wanted to learn to express my art in another form," says Bryan. Although his first love is 2D art, Bryan studied 3D modelling and animation in San Francisco, becoming more confident of getting work in that field, and then squeezed in the traditional art classes when he could.

He's recently dedicated himself to freelancing and working on concept art for the video game and film industries.

1 THE AMBUSH "What started out as a simple demonstration sketch to show the ease of using a Wacom tablet in Photoshop for a few colleagues ended up being a worthy piece to finish. I decided to give it a little life by adding some details to the main subject, a splash of warm colour hue, and lights."

2 FALLEN ANGEL "I was inspired to do this piece after watching a Victoria's Secret commercial. Seriously! I wanted to portray an angel soldier from the heavens who'd just been sent to Earth for battle."

3 JOKER HULK VS SUPERMAN "My love for comics will never die. They give me the fuel to pursue art. I try to find any motivation to help drive me to draw and paint more, and fan work enables me to do just that at times."

4 DEMON KNIGHT "I wanted to create a big-boss medieval character that would normally appear in a typical hack-'n'-slash fantasy video game. My original idea was to give this character a crazy knight helmet, but I later stuck with a horrifying demon head because an ugly face is more intimidating."

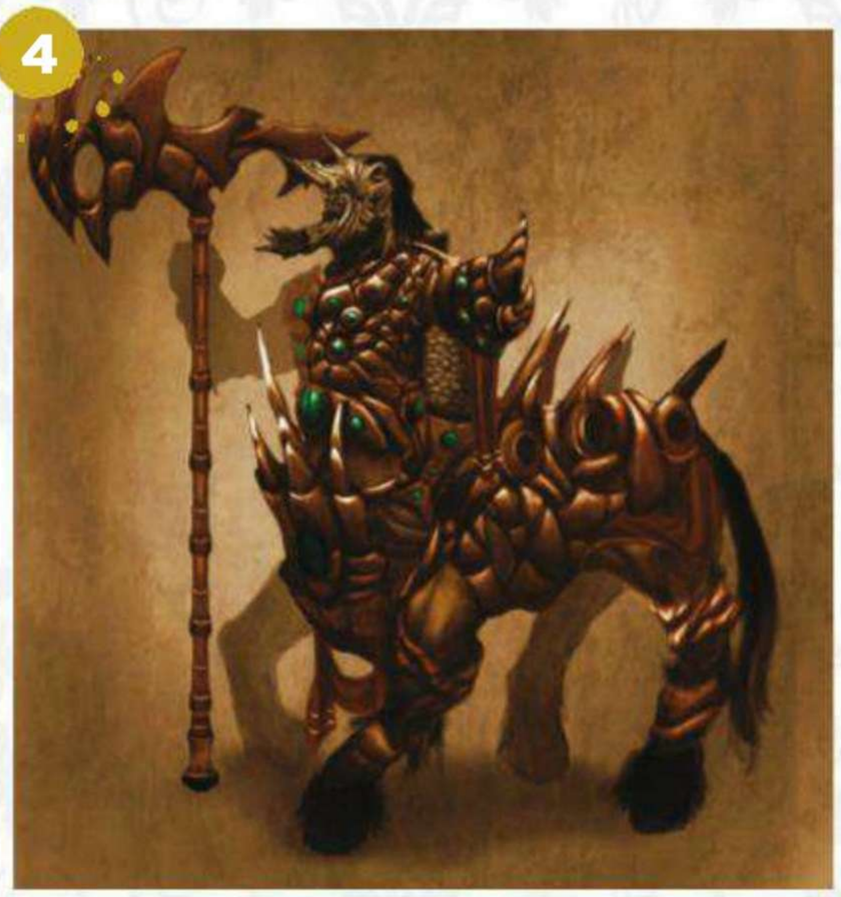
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4



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Esben Lash Rasmussen

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EMAIL: elrartist@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



With the main features of Photoshop under his belt at the age of 13, Esben loves spending time playing around with the trusty digital software. "It was at the age of 17 that I chose to follow my dream of becoming a concept artist and illustrator," he says, and he hasn't regretted a second of it.

Esben is studying for a BFA in computer graphics arts at The Animation Workshop and aims to work abroad when he graduates. "I try to experiment with different styles and approaches," he says, "and I hope that shows in my art."







1 DIGITAL CROQUI "These are one-minute digital sketches. I went over them afterwards and made them pop. I placed some more interesting strokes and a bit of white to give an indication of form."

2 UNPLEASANT PATH "This was a school assignment. We had to create our own environment with a strong atmosphere, which had to include rocks."

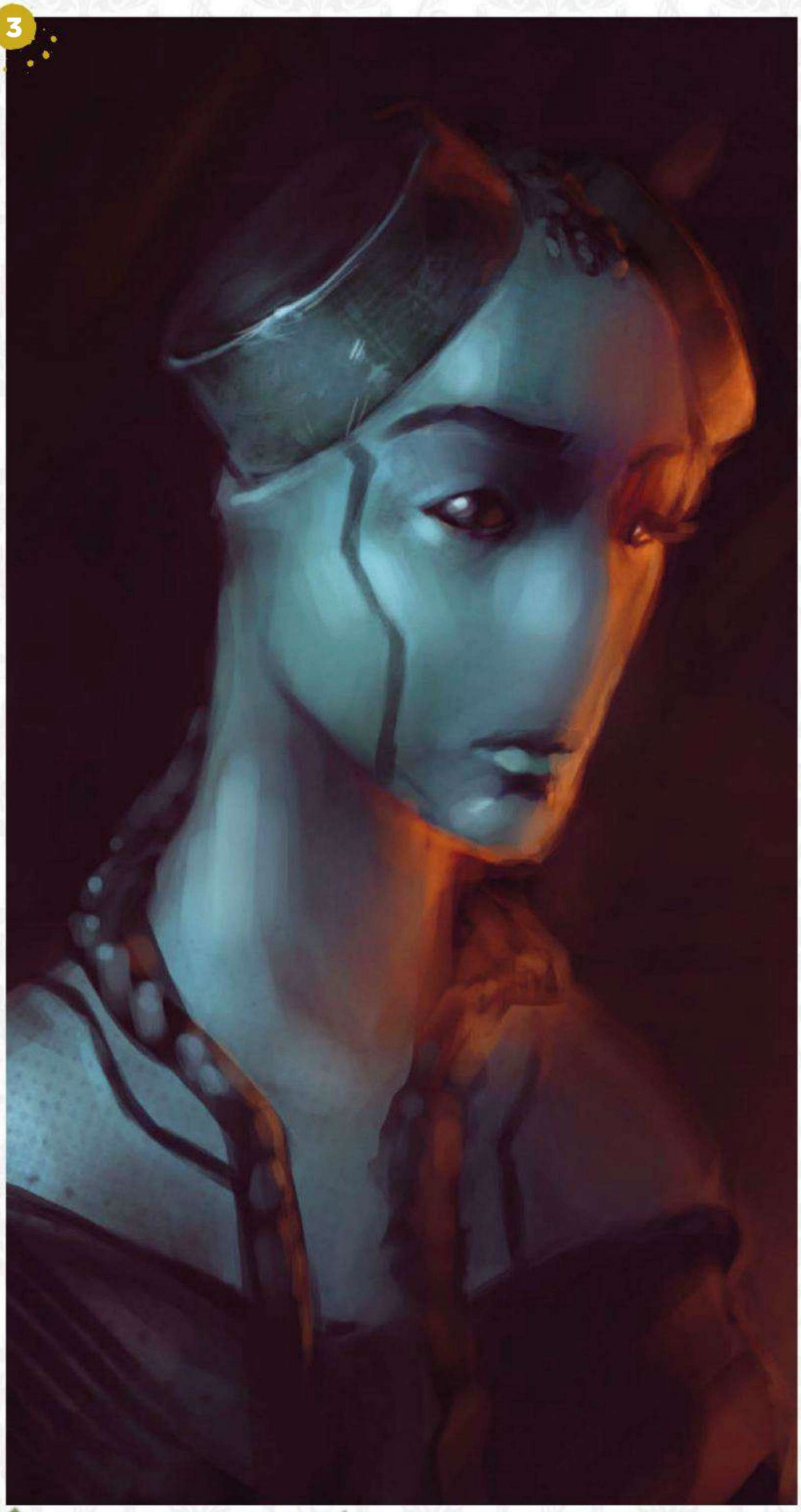
3 SIGNIFICANT PORTRAIT TITLE "I just started painting directly in colour with no clue of how it was going to end up. It slowly developed into a portrait of a person/alien. I didn't want it to be polished, because I prefer a rough and sketchy look."

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3



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Esben's quick, sketchy paintings are proof that you don't have to slave over every detail to produce effective results. A solid understanding of colour and form combined with an inventive imagination means Esben's sketches are anything but throwaway."
Claire Howlett, Editor

SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them.
fxpose@imaginefx.com

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ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY ART COMMUNITY

With books such as the forthcoming Halo: The Art of Building Worlds, featuring art like this image by Issac Hannaford, game art is receiving more recognition.



> Game art is seen and interacted with by many more people than an average piece of fine art in a gallery **Nicole Cardiff**

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NOT OF THIS WORLD
Justin Gerard's latest project is an exhibition of Tolkien-world art that will go on display in March 2012, but you can follow his progress online now.
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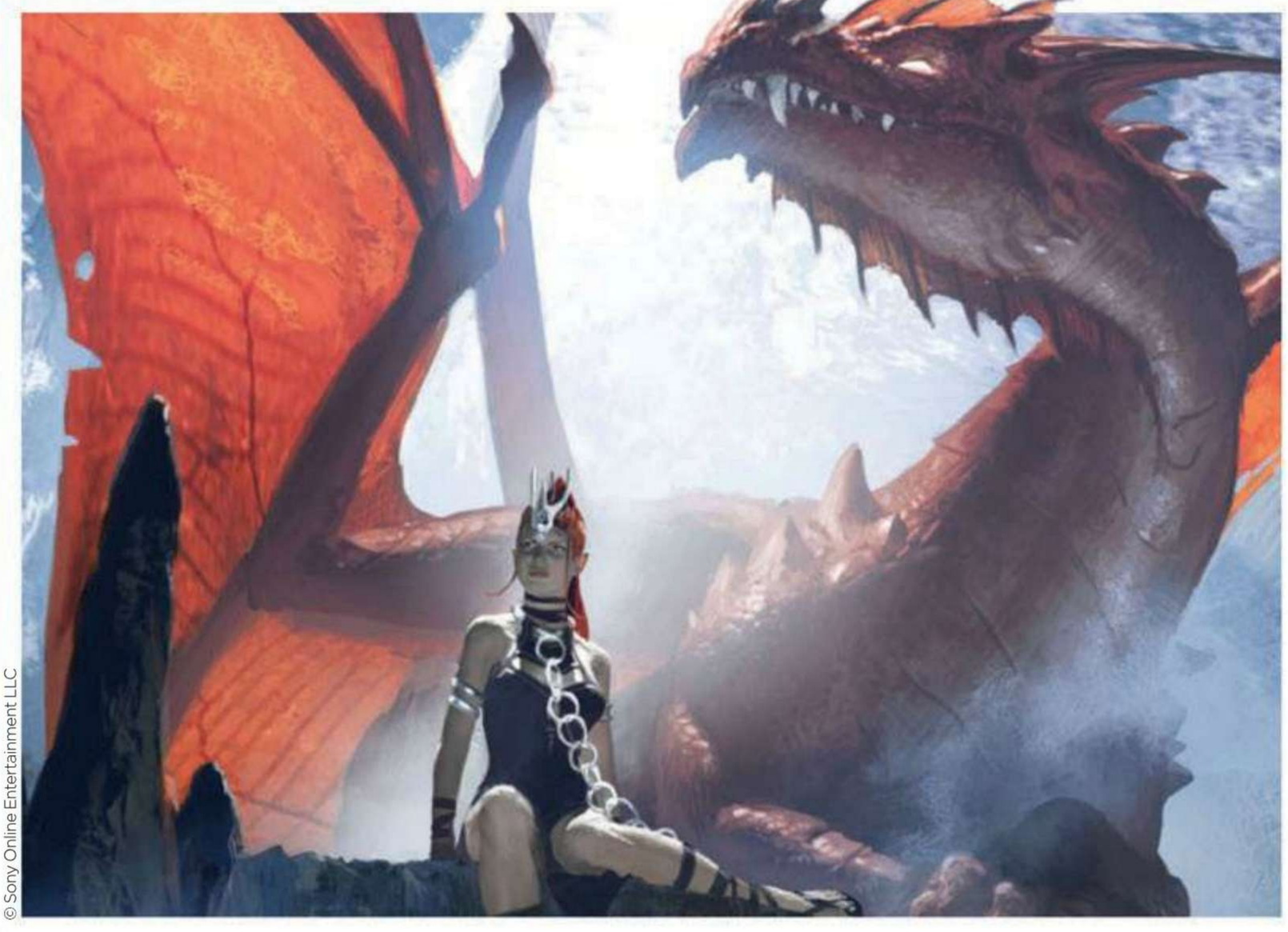
SUNKEN TREASURE
Video game artist Paul Davidson talks about his self-published artbook, which is crammed full of original work and panels from his work with Marvel.
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WORKING OUT WITH A CINTIQ
Steve Argyle's studio workspace is a little... odd. But if it enables him to create great art, who are we to pass judgement. Wait – can an artist have groupies?
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© Sony Online Entertainment LLC

Michael Komarck's Dragon Priestess, left, created for EverQuest spin-off Legends of Norrath, has a strong sense of drama and a visual narrative.

Halo: The Art of Building Worlds is out on 21 October, priced £25, from Titan Books.



Halo artwork © Microsoft

Changing the rules of the game

Trend setting With some rumblings of change in how game art is seen by the art establishment, should we be re-evaluating its art?

Video games aren't just big business. As well as bringing in profits that eclipse the GDPs of small nations, they're also massive magnets for the very best global artists working today. And yet somehow, outside the games industry, concept and character art for video games still hasn't achieved the kudos enjoyed by some comic and film art. Let alone the prestige of work that falls within the parameters of 'fine art'.

That's all changing, though. Art produced for games, big and small, has recently made significant moves to shake off the idea of being merely a disposable, commercially functional stepping stone to an end product.



"Video games have made serious strides for recognition as an art form," Joe Shoopack, artistic development director at Sony Online Entertainment, says. And game art follows closely behind. "This past year, the US National Endowment for the Arts added video games as eligible for grants, and the [US museum complex] Smithsonian is doing a big exhibit on the Art of Video Games next year, covering 40 years of art evolution in gaming."

Game artists have also found gallery space with such initiatives as Into the Pixel, a competition that celebrates games art







© Sony Online Entertainment LLC

The Into the Pixel exhibition, which has included such pieces as Nicole Cardiff's Radiance, Chris Dien's Enhanced Space Suit, and Tomasz Jedruszek's Element Pact, is enabling a new audience to enjoy game art.

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Continued from previous page...



© Sony Online Entertainment LLC

Craig Spearing's piece for Legends of Norrath features subtle nuances in facial expression.

with a touring gallery show in the US. A proliferation of coffee table quality 'Art of' books such as Ballistic Publishing's game art series and Titan's forthcoming Halo: The Art of Building Worlds also suggests a shift to seeing the artistic merits of game art.

Yet it's still a divisive subject. Although all art is entertainment, many regard game art's main role as being worth less than art created for art's sake. Freelance artist and Into the Pixel winner



Nicole Cardiff doesn't agree. "Game art is seen and interacted with by many more people than an average piece of fine art in a gallery," she says. "Also, some fine artists and modern art historians seem to forget that most art through the centuries was commissioned for a specific purpose, a function."

For Halo artist Eddie Smith, when game art enters the world of the gallery exhibition, it enters a world with its own inbuilt presumptions. "I don't think game art will ever be taken in by the world of fine art," he says, "because that world is riddled with snobs who assume that something that (mainly) kids love can't be taken seriously."

While some will continue to try to have the last say about the value of fine art versus commercial art, there seems to be only an increasing number of fans willing to celebrate the unique qualities of great game art and artists. Plus, as Eddie is pleased to point out, "art critics may not fully understand game art yet, but that may change when the young games fans of today grow up to own the art galleries of tomorrow."



Conveying the supernatural powers of the heroine was an important task.

Nowt so queer as folk

New worlds Mike Corriero reveals his new fascination with people



Mike Corriero can usually be found inventing new alien creations in otherworldly environments, but for his recent project he's turned to something scarier – the human form.

Mike has created art for the sci-fi/fantasy project Shadow Walker, which is written by Wendy Brotherlin, author of a number of stories aimed at young teenagers. The story concentrates on an 18-year-old 'empath' who reads residual energy at crime scenes. "This was one of the first projects where I focused entirely on human-based character designs," says Mike, "and I found humans can be as unique and fun to design as any strange animal species."

Mike first started collaborating with Wendy in 2004, and since then she's finished Shadow Walkers and written another young adult novel, Freaks of Nature, also with Mike's art.

Further details on the projects and more of Mike's art are at **wendybrotherlin.com**.



Creating a character that's an altered version of a real human can be incredibly creative.

Not of this world

Gallery Illustrator Justin Gerard is revisiting one of his true loves in a new exhibition

The fantastically talented Justin Gerard has just announced that he'll be unveiling an exhibition of new Tolkien-world art in March 2012, at The Gallery Nucleus, Alhambra, CA.



What's more, he'll keep us posted on the progression of the new images he's creating for the show from October onwards, on his **blog quickhidehere.blogspot.com**.

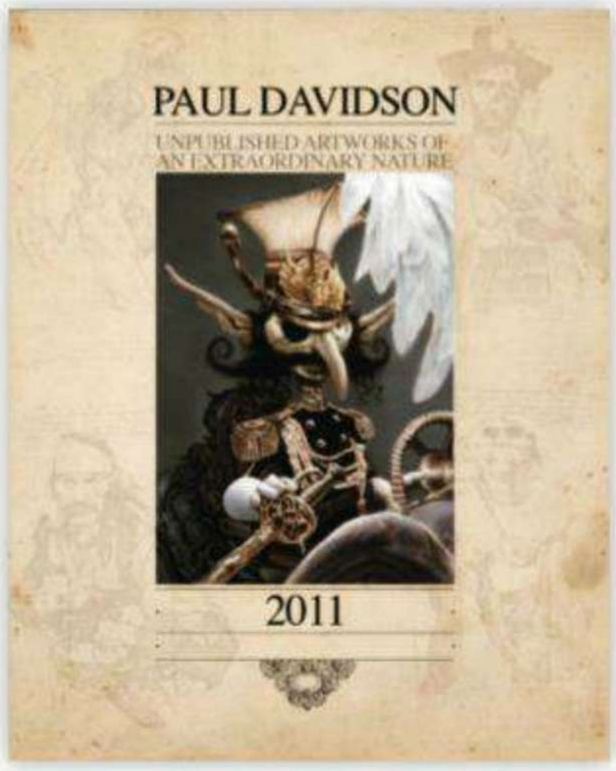
"I'm excited to announce that I'm heading back into Middle-earth for a show set in the far past of Tolkien's epic series," says Justin, "like the previous self-initiated 2009 series on The Hobbit that I did, the pieces will be primarily watercolour and pencil, with a few oils, acrylics and digital pieces."

Have a look at some more of Justin's artworks here: **justingerard.com**.

Justin's following up his 2009 Hobbit series with a look at the far past of Tolkien's world.

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Sunken treasure

Self-published For his first book Paul Davidson went in at the deep end…

A couple of months before Paul Davidson's appearance at London's KAPOW! this



year, he decided he wanted an art book to promote at the convention. He spent a hectic few weeks creating bespoke art and putting together a collection of his favourite personal pieces, and debuted his book at the comic show.

"I knew getting a 28-page, full-colour, glossy A4 book wasn't going to be cheap, but the positive response from the book has made it all worthwhile," he says.

After a ten-year stint working in the video games industry as a concept artist, Paul wanted to get back into making comics, and over the past year-and-a-half he's been splitting his working day between Marvel and illustrations for the publishing world.

He's also managed to cram in work for his own comic AquaForce, a work-in-progress that follows a special team of Aqua Marines which police the Bermuda Triangle from an underwater base off the coast of Miami.

Paul's signing all copies of his new book sold through his website, with the added bonus of free original Marvel artwork drawn by the artist with every purchase. To get your hands on a copy of the book, visit **pauldavidsonart.com**.



Paul's giving away panels of his Marvel art with every purchase of his book. Here's just one of them.

"Kraken was created using digital paint under highly rendered pencil, and it's one of my most successful images in my portfolio."



"I've been calling these deep-sea villains the Mergoyle, but I'm quite sure that'll change!"



"Fathom-Bot is concept art from a creator-owned comic book."



"Here's Lava Genie up close. Ice Genie is currently being developed!"

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deviantART

+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART…



Zang Lu

zhanglu.deviantart.com

Thoughtful pirates, gruesome vampires and epic battle scenes – this Chinese artist has clearly got range on his side, but he's also developed a specific style that's all his own. Subtle colour is used to create motion in his digital images, and his first stab at 3D modelling is most impressive.



Sakimi Chan

sakimichan.deviantart.com

Sakimi's dreamy – yet at times cold and sharp – paintings are startling. With a large gallery that recalls her art from 2007 to 2011, it's amazing to see the marked improvement in her use of colour and light. Images such as Lady and Come to Life show her great feel for her subject matter.



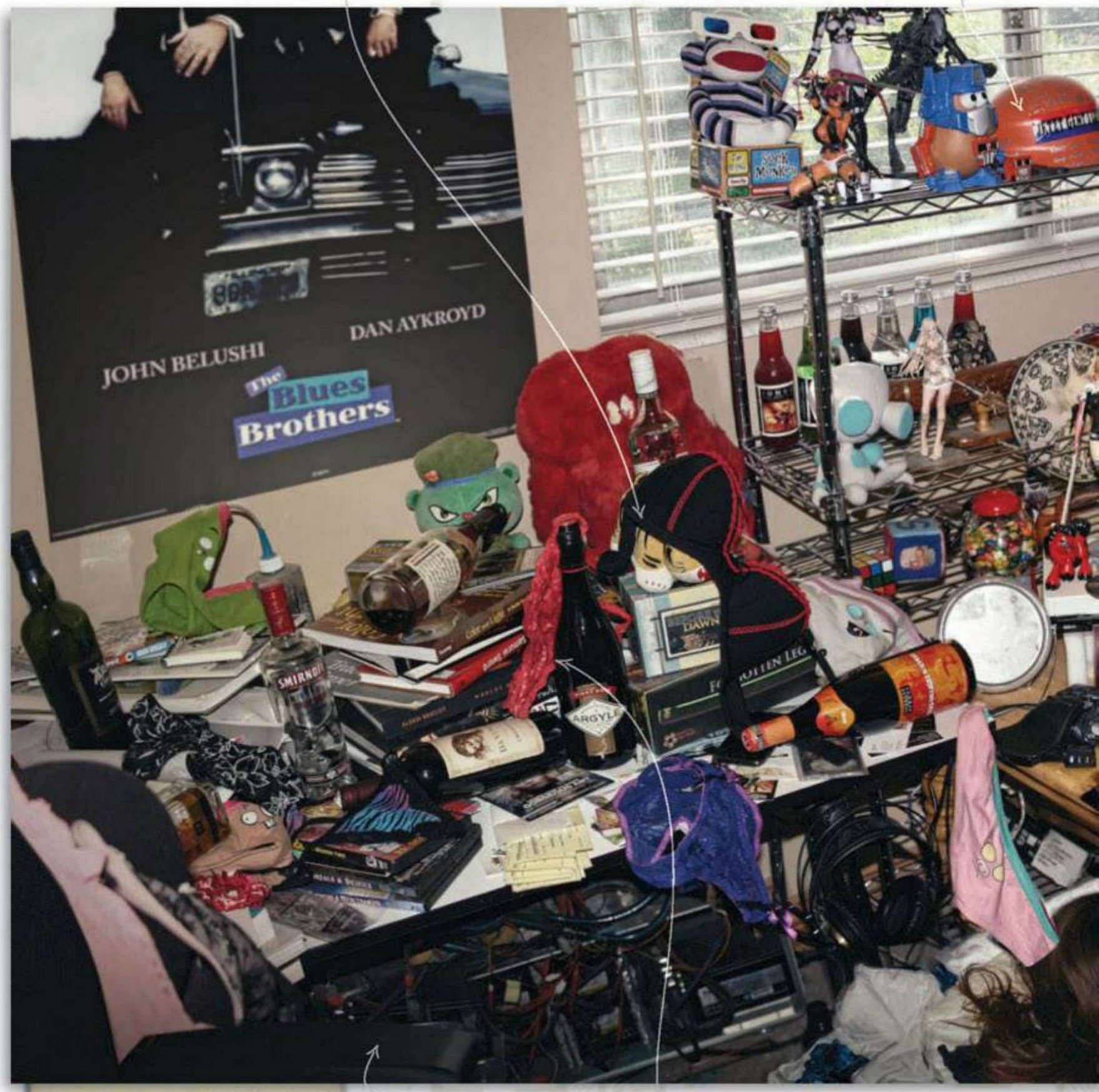
Zain7

zain7.deviantart.com

This Japanese artist has a knack of creating an inviting, 'real' sense of place in his paintings, while using some particularly unreal colours, with hypnotic results. His portraits are more direct, and even though he's pared down his gallery to a handful of favourites, it's worth going to see what's there.

As if I don't already have enough to sidetrack me, I try to keep up with the books and games I illustrate. Today there's some Magic: The Gathering and Legend of the Five Rings. Both will utterly consume you, but you'll enjoy it at the same time.

My orange Dutch anti-Nazi helmet is signed by the gamer clan representatives of many nations. This ultimate artist tool requires no further explanation.



Water-cooled, two quad-cores, eight-disk RAID 6, solid-state system drive, and an ocean of RAM makes my home-grown processing juggernaut look more like a Borg orgy than a computer at this point.

My house is basically a near-unnavigable labyrinth of books for reference, inspiration and distraction. Here I have Iain McCaig's Shadowline, Aleksi Briclot's Worlds and Wonders, and James Gurney's Color and Light. They're all so good they make you want to quit forever... I mean work harder.



Steve Argyle

Idler's art With the relentless morning sunlight forcing Steve out of bed, the artist takes us through a breakdown of his home setup



When I was invited to write an article to showcase my workspace, first I asked: "Will I have to clean?" then: "If it involves effort, I'm not doing it." Luckily, ImagineFX agreed that a candid snapshot taken on a typical day would make just as interesting a studio portrait as the usual organised, cleaned and professional ones featured.

My workspace is a decadent little corner of clutter. I usually fall out of bed, hopefully some time before the denizens I live with come home from their day jobs. Shambling my way towards the kitchen is the first of many distractions as I avoid starting work. Much of my 'work day' consists of excuses, such as, "Oh, I should work out – I can't properly use hotkeys if my gut sits on the keyboard!" and "Now I should answer my

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I bought this mic for video tutorials, podcasts and Skype 'n' sketch sessions.

I like seeing what I'm working on, and Futurama, on my 30-inch screen. More monitor means more awesome.

I have a Baby Cthulhu toy to help remind me whose dark service I'm in.

I use the lovely Photoshop Configuration plug-in that enables you to make your own menus. I have buttons for my most used functions, such as Set Up Canvas, Make Better and Make This Thing on Fire.

Occasionally I pretend to be a real artist with my Golden 'Open' Acrylics. Also buried somewhere are some oil paints. They've probably been fashioned into a fortress for stowaway pets by now, though.



Tidying my workspace wouldn't have looked natural or been good for me and my waning work ethic.

When a whole keyboard isn't enough buttons, this programmable Belkin game controller saves tons of time with its hotkey and macro magic.

If you're reading this – and my psychic powers tell me you are – then you'll be familiar with the divine digital canvas of Cintiq.

email – my tens of fans deserve to have their questions answered!" Then there's, "You know what I don't do enough? Practise playing guitar without using my fingers" and "Well, I can't work now! Not with a steaming fresh ImagineFX that needs reading!" Once the gruelling hours of not working are over, I finally settle into a disciplined, committed, hardcore 10 to 15 minutes of productivity.

Because of my aversion to discipline and hard work, I use a variety of shortcuts and tools to make the most of my tiny bursts of focus. Take a look at all of my keen floating annotations to learn more. Forget studying and practising! With the right plug-ins and hardware, you too can live the hedonistic rock star lifestyle of the geek artist!

Steve is a freelance illustrator and CGI artist. To see his work, visit steveargyle.com.



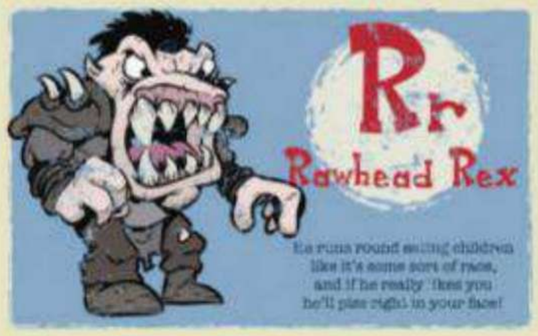
Clinging tenaciously to my youthful dreams of being a rockstar, I've collected a fine selection of axes. Not pictured: my pink Hello Kitty Stratocaster.

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In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists



Horror **S is for Scary**

Nik Holmes has created a horror-tastic cartoon alphabet with his Granny Grimm's Ghoulish Book of Grammar. Updating a new gruesome image every Thursday, it's a treat for kids of all ages. Have a look here: **bit.ly/nholmes**.



Instant art **Dispenser**

American art fans should never be without art inspiration, thanks to the bizarrely brilliant Art-o-mat. Artist Clark Whittington is behind the retired cigarette vending machines that have been converted to vend art, and is looking for more art to dispense. For more, go to **artomat.org**.

Digital **Wall art**

Digital art is getting the The World Famous Wall Art Rockers treatment. They produce contemporary digital art mounted on high-gloss acrylic panels, including some images that'll be familiar to ImagineFX readers. Have a look: **wallartrockers.com**.





Life is Humiliation

by Matt Boyce



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"I think the hard part is finding new angles to show a dragon from, because it's all been done!"

Lucas Graciano hits the nail on the head when it comes to drawing a staple of fantasy art… Page 63





Heather wrote and illustrated Thaddeus the Boss in answer to the young daughter's question of "What do bosses do?"

Fantasy bedtime reading

Writer painter Heather Theurer swaps graceful dragons for a different type of fantasy with the publication of her first children's book



Heather Theurer can usually be found painting majestic dragons of epic proportions. But for her latest project she decided to take a totally different approach.

From September 2010 until March this year she's worked on Thaddeus the Boss, a children's book inspired by her young daughter, published this autumn by Channel Photographics. "For this project I got to see a simple idea, sparked by the funny behaviour of my then five-year-old daughter, blossom into a fully fleshed book," she says.

Heather provided both art and words for the book: "I also have a couple of novels tucked away on my hard drive that I'd love to see shared some day," she says. But thankfully, with a Spectrum silver award given to her last year, and the beautifully illustrated Thaddeus on sale this autumn, she has no plans to give up the art just yet.

Visit **heathertheurer.com** to see more of Heather's fantasy art.

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Forum

Winners

Image of the month

Monocled Miracle seller Who would have thought that a consumer warning would be at the heart of this issue's Forum winning image?

While short in stature, the dapper merchant is long in confidence. The result? A captive audience with two words running through their heads: "Seems legit..."



A familiar avatar on the ImagineFX forums, Matt G (aka Disco Matt) has found the healthily competitive, loose feel of the challenges fits his style perfectly. With a characteristic quick approach to his images that betrays a natural process, Matt created this image in record time.

"I just sketched away to see what characters developed," he says, "keeping the image loose throughout... in fact it may have been a little bit too loose!"

The result perfectly captures the spirit of the Buyer Beware challenge, as well as being great fun to view. A well-deserved winner!

MYFX TITLE: Buyer Beware
WINNER: Matt G (Disco Matt)
GALLERY: imagineFX.com/disco_matt







Even while making the move from greyscale to colour, Matt resisted the temptation to tighten up his sketchy depiction of the characters.

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"It's great how Matt put several characters into this. The merchant reminds me of those travelling medicine men who sell genuine miracle cures for every possible ailment, then mysteriously disappear before their patients find out they've paid over £50 for a small vial of green water." paper-dreams (Hayley Merrington)

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Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx

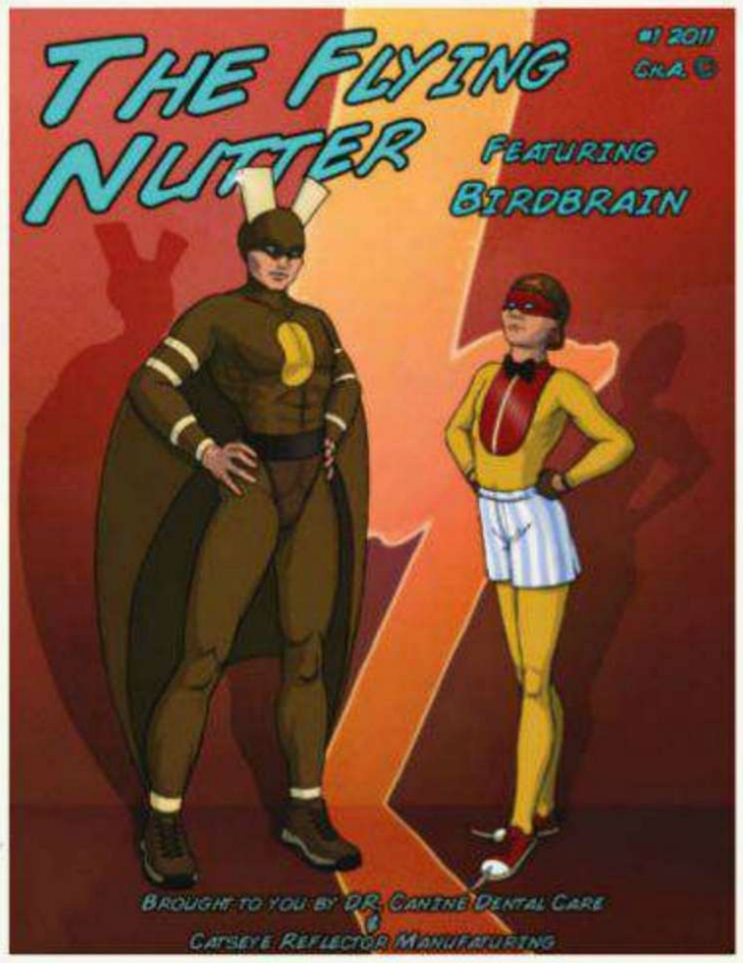


MYFX TITLE: Highview Hospital
WINNER: Max Hugo (Mhugo)
GALLERY: imagineFX.com/mhugo



"The Highview Hospital challenge was great fun. I tried to set my hospital in a serene and peaceful atmosphere, but suggest also isolation and a sometimes hostile environment. As always, I found the process of working on a weekly challenge really, well, challenging, while still being great fun."





MYFX TITLE: Soldier
WINNER: Krzysztof Krygier (Mellon)
GALLERY: imagineFX.com/mellon



"In this Forum challenge I had to paint a soldier, which usually wouldn't have happened because it's not my thing – and that's exactly why I really enjoy those challenges. They're pushing me to do something out of my comfort zone and in time, when I'm preparing my portfolio, variety will be something really desirable. Hopefully, I'll also be able to include the lovely crits from my fellow Forumites in there, too!"

MYFX TITLE: Flying Rodent Guy
WINNER: Charlotte Ahlgren (Voluspa)
GALLERY: imagineFX.com/voluspa



"Given the name and brief of the challenge, I chose to go silly while still trying to produce a good image and (fairly) simple characters that it would be possible to draw again and again in an actual comic. It turned out a little murky colour-wise, but I had a lot of fun going back through some old ImagineFX issues and trying out some classic ImagineFX tips – especially looking at the recent workshops from Andrew Jones and Eric Jones. I'm pretty pleased with the results, but I'm the first to admit that there's always room for improvement."

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

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Tell us your thoughts on: www.facebook.com/imaginefx



TSR's Dungeons & Dragons opened up a world of fantasy art to many new fans. But this style had been growing through magazines, comics, books and even music.

Where's John?

While looking through issue 72 of your brilliant magazine, I found the next issue preview. I was immediately excited about the classic fantasy to be featured, and then read that John Howe would also be giving a workshop! Since he's one of my long-time favourite artists, I was certainly looking forward to the next issue.

As soon as I received issue 73 I looked for the workshop, but found no mention of it, and no work from John Howe. Why is this? It could be possible that I'm not looking hard enough, but I've looked quite hard.

Benedict Farley, via email

Claire replies Here's the story: John Howe agreed to do a workshop for us, but very close to deadline he had to retract his offer because of his work on the film The Hobbit. We didn't mean to mislead, but from time to time things can change between when we write the Next Month page and when that issue comes out. John says he'll work for us in the future, probably after his time on The Hobbit is over. We'll keep you posted!



DID YOU MISS ISSUE 74?

We've still got a few copies left, but you need to move fast! See page 55 for details on how to get hold of one.

History of fantasy artwork

Leafing through some back issues, I found the Dungeons & Dragons special issue. I feel that the case for its influence was somewhat overstated, because before D&D came to prominence, there was already a large body of fantasy artwork adorning the covers of paperbacks and magazines.

This began in 1969, in the form of the Conan paperbacks with the Frazetta covers. Soon Conan was adapted to comic books by Roy Thomas and Barry Windsor Smith for Marvel. Marvel also began its black and white comics with Savage Sword of Conan. This series – again written by Roy Thomas – featured covers by a young Boris Vallejo. Around this time the Warren magazine-format comics, Eerie and Creepy, also became more fantasy-orientated. In France, the appearance of Metal Hurlant and Pilote gave rise to Heavy Metal magazine. Fantasy art was also prominent on album covers.

So although TSR was responsible for the first role-playing game, it was just a part of a larger picture in terms of fantasy artwork. The standard of artwork in the early D&D books was pretty amateurish. Chaosium's RuneQuest sported superior artwork in the early days. It wasn't until the early 80s that TSR began to upgrade D&D by hiring the talents of the likes of Larry Elmore. Even so, it took it a long time to replace the internal illustrations with more professional ones. It wasn't really until the Dragonlance and Forgotten Realms books that D&D came of age – the latter, of course, sporting the intricate renderings of Steve Fabian.

Although I'm biased, it seems to me that Citadel/GW's Warhammer tabletop fantasy books, along with their RPG and licenced versions of Chaosium products, were also quite influential. Their Realm of Chaos supplements would introduce a darkness not previously seen in such products.

The album at **on.fb.me/olerjO** contains material done for Games Workshop during the 80s. The majority are from the Realm of Chaos books and Warhammer 40,000.

Tony Ackland, via email

Claire replies Hello Tony, thanks for your email. I don't think we said that D&D started fantasy art; we just stated that for many, it was their first insight into this world of visual delights. Thanks for all of your interesting insights into the art from this era – great gallery, too!



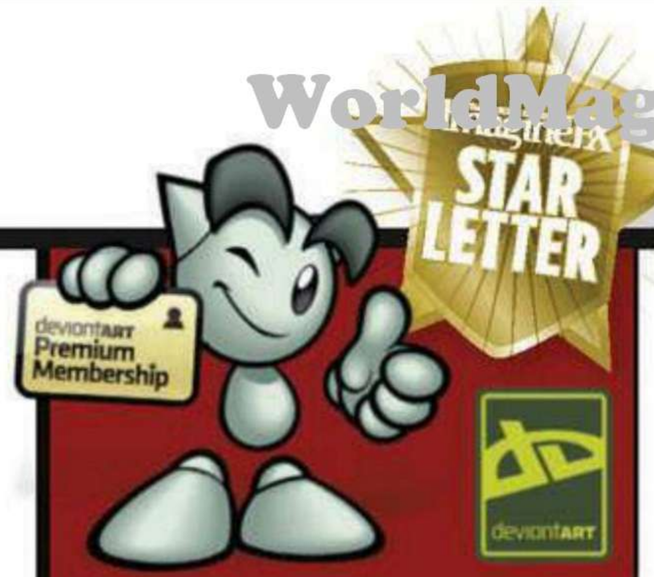
Luna has only just started reading ImagineFX, and already she's sending in her anime-style fantasy artworks. Keep it up!

Party time

I just bought my first copy of ImagineFX and I love it! I've sent you this drawing (pictured left) as a thank you. It's not too good but it's one of my best so far. I hope you like it.

Luna, via email

Claire replies Hello Luna, we always love receiving art from readers, so thanks a lot. I hope you continue to enjoy reading IFX.



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- And more!

Discovering your own style

I'm just embarking on my third year of an ImagineFX subscription. Before, I was always opening up each new issue and feeling a mixture of wonder and intimidation. The amount of amazing talent out there is boggling and I soon discovered, after following some of the tutorials in the magazine, that everyone has a different artistic approach.

I've spent many frustrating hours looking into my computer's monitor hopefully, then looking down at the magazine and back to my monitor and, with a sort of shrill, tortured squeal, closing Photoshop without saving the disappointing mess I've made of the finely crafted tutorial I've strived to emulate.

And then I finally realised that emulating the processes of others isn't the idea – rather it's about adopting some of their approaches into my own toolkit and adapting them to suit what I do best. I feel that I'm making headway as a digital artist now, and that's with no small thanks to the inspiration your magazine has given me. Although perhaps some of the tutorials should come with a bright sticker that reads: "Warning: You must be extremely f***ing talented to pull this one off, so don't be surprised if what you draw looks like a bad birthday card your Gran would give you."

Sacha Bryning, via email

Claire replies You've got it spot on, Sacha – and you've made me laugh, too! Finding your own way is the best thing an aspiring artist can do. It's also – frustratingly – the hardest thing to do. You may like the way, for example, one artist uses greyscale and try to emulate that, or see how an artist thumbnails and try that. By following others, something should just click in the way you approach your work, and your own journey will begin. Good luck.

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Issue 1 February 2006



This is the digital version of the first – and very collectable – print edition of ImagineFX. Inside we dedicate our first-ever legends accolade to Frank Frazetta, while our workshop section covers creating a matte painting, colour theory, manga and photo references.

Issue 4 May 2006



Twenty five tips to design better aliens, plus workshops from Marta Dahlig, cover artist Jason Chan and Gary Tonge show how to paint abstract images, gothic portraits and speed-paint a landscape. We also talk with Brom, Mike Corriero and Thierry Doizon.

Issue 43 May 2009



We love Pepper! Stanley Lau tells us about the genesis of our cover star, Chester Ocampo paints a magical manga character, while Marta Dahlig shares her ten favourite Photoshop brushes. And we help one reader take their painting skills to the next level in Art Class.

Issue 50 December 2009



It's our 50th issue and to celebrate we created a list of the most inspirational fantasy and sci-fi artists alive today. Andrew Jones provided us with the cover, and we also talk to Craig Mullins and James Gurney shares his secrets. Plus District 9 concept art!

Issue 54 March 2010



Pin-ups! Adam Hughes gives his top ten tips on how to paint beautiful females, and we look at the history of the art form, including the unique work of Sorayama. Plus create ZBrush beasts, learn how to paint on the fly, and Painter and Photoshop go head-to-head.

Issue 72 August 2011



Pore over Bobby Chiu's marvellous cover workshop, then paint fur, scales, feathers and more with our creature special issue. Plus: Massive Black laid bare, Paul Gerrard talks about his Battle: Los Angeles art and Terryl Whitlatch reveals the thinking behind her life-like fantasy beasts.

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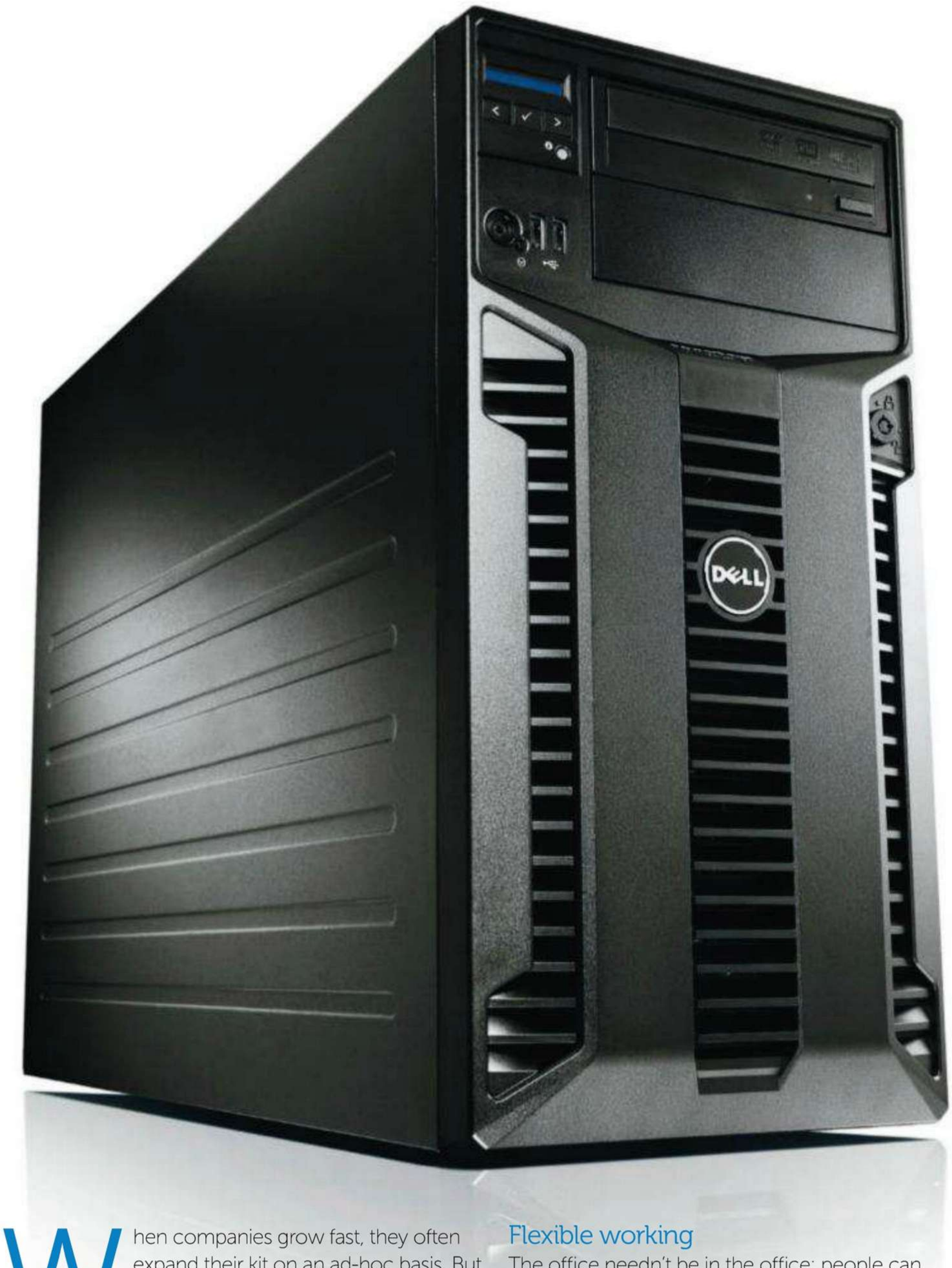
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Creative computing

Seven ways to boost your bottom line



When companies grow fast, they often expand their kit on an ad-hoc basis. But there's a better solution. Moving to a server-based system, or refreshing your existing servers, can boost your business in all kinds of ways. Here's how.

Improved collaboration

Say goodbye to email tennis and unproductive meetings. Servers enable teams to share email systems, calendars, asset libraries, customer information and works in progress no matter where they're located. Using the Dell PowerEdge T410 as a centralised server gives you up to 18TB storage — so you'll never be short of space.

Flexible working

The office needn't be in the office: people can work from wherever's convenient, connecting to the central hub via their broadband connections or mobile devices. These systems can also ease collaboration and communication with clients, enabling them to collaborate and comment.

Faster workflow

Storing key data on a central server makes a huge difference to your workflow. Shared assets are always the most up-to-date versions. Changes are easy to track. Comments are easy to share. And revisions are easy to undo when clients or lead creatives change their minds.

Data discipline

When everybody's in charge of their own data it's all too easy to end up with chaotic file systems, not to mention the risk of accidental deletion or data loss. With server-based systems that's far less of a worry: centralised storage keeps everything in its right place, while centralised backups mean every asset is archived. For smaller companies, backup solutions such as Dell PowerVault RD1000 removable disk storage offers low-cost, rock-solid, super-speedy backup. Meanwhile larger organisations can benefit from the server-connected PowerVault MD3220 storage array's incredible scalability, with support for up to 96 extra drives shared between up to four servers.

Improve security and management

Access to files, folders and applications can be provided on a need-to-know basis. With KACE asset management appliances, system and client management is easier than ever: Dell's doing to system management what it did with hardware, taking complex, proprietary technology, simplifying it and streamlining it.

Reduce overheads

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Artist Q&A

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The ImagineFX panel

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

Lauren K Cannon



Lauren is a freelance fantasy artist who specialises in the surreal. She lives in a small woodland village in New Jersey, US.

navate.com

Brynn Metheney



Brynn was raised in the Mojave desert and moved to the Bay Area in 2006. Creature and animal illustrations are her forte.

brynnart.com

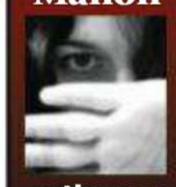
Paco Rico Torres



Paco is a freelance illustrator living in Spain who's painted for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.

pacorico.blogspot.com

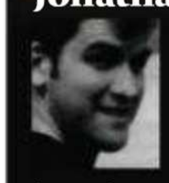
Manon



Manon is a freelance artist who specialises in fantasy, horror and portraiture. She enjoys painting drooling beasties and cute creatures.

artbymanon.com

Jonathan Standing



Jonathan is an English artist and illustrator. He's based near Toronto, Canada, and works for a developer in the video games industry.

jonathanstanding.com

Mark Facey



Mark is a freelance illustrator and concept artist with a love for creatures and world building. He lives in the Midlands, England.

creaturejournal.tumblr.com

Eric Vedder



Eric has built a career working for the likes of Capcom and Silicon Knights. He works in the video games industry, and freelances on the side.

ericvedder.com

Question

How do I paint a scene of a carnivorous creature tearing the flesh from its prey?

Mark Denby, US



Answer

Brynn replies



Painting the gruesome scene of a hunter consuming its prey can seem tricky. Depending on what you're going for, the key is to keep it looking natural – as if this is the way the predators have always eaten. Naturally, any reference you can gather will help you in creating the scene. Another important aspect of this piece relates to the tooth structure of the carnivore. This will always affect how the creature uses its mouth to process its food.

In my painting, you can see two ways of processing the flesh. Depending on what type of predator you're painting, the way the creature handles its meal will differ between mouth shapes and teeth. When beginning this painting, I sketched in a pencil layer to figure out how the flesh of the carcass would move around. As you can see, the two pieces of flesh act differently depending on how they're being eaten.

Comparing the flesh to putty or clay can help you determine how it will react to being pulled and sheared away from a carcass.

Once I figure out the acting of the carnivores and the composition of the piece, I'm then able to start laying in colour. I lay in the flesh tone and skin layer of the carcass. It's important to remember that flesh and muscle aren't always completely blood-soaked, either. I lay in a base, then I rough in darks and lights. I keep any blood on a separate layer, so I can edit it easily if I need to. Once I have the flesh and blood figured out, I can begin to lay in highlights to give it the feeling of being wet.

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Step-by-step:
Paint a predator devouring its catch



1 As you can see, I begin by laying in simple colour, gradually building up the volumes as I go along. Using this technique will help me to see which direction the flesh is moving in and where I need to add highlights and shadows later on in the process. Once I'm happy with that, I do the same with the predators.



2 As I build up the flesh, I'm careful to keep the idea of motion in mind. The flesh that's being pulled and stretched by the predator should be painted with brush strokes that enhance that movement. I also begin to add blood at this point, keeping it on a different layer so that it's easy for me to alter at a later stage if necessary.



3 When you're painting the flesh in your scene, it's important to keep in mind the layers of fat that are found between the creature's skin and muscle. I've now laid in highlights and shadows to give the flesh and the predators more volume. The highlights also help to make the flesh and blood look wet.

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Question
When I'm working on waterscapes, how can I create the effect of a big splash in still water?
Josie Price, UK



Water can be tough to paint, so take advantage of ways to simplify things. Water splashes can be depicted using mainly white froth.

Answer
Lauren replies



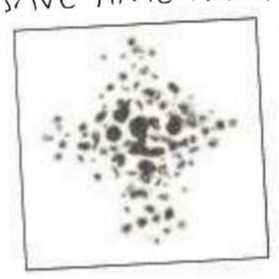
Still water is one of the less-daunting waterscapes to tackle, especially in digital artworks. You can just mirror your background in the water, apply a quick subtle horizontal motion blur, and mostly be in business. Likewise, splashes seem complicated but they aren't so bad…

Agitated water will have a white, frothy appearance. It will take some patience, but overall isn't too difficult to paint. Have a soft, round brush handy, along with some good splatter effect custom brushes for easy texture. Work at a low opacity and build up to create depth without changing your brush colour. Avoid making the droplet spray too uniform.

Think about the trajectory of the splash and what caused it. A splash coming off a dolphin's tail will look different to the splash left behind when someone dives into the water, for instance. The splash that you create should tell a story instead of exploding willy-nilly across the image. Speaking of which, splashes can be a fun compositional tool, too, so don't be afraid to bend the rules of physics if you need to!

Artist's secret

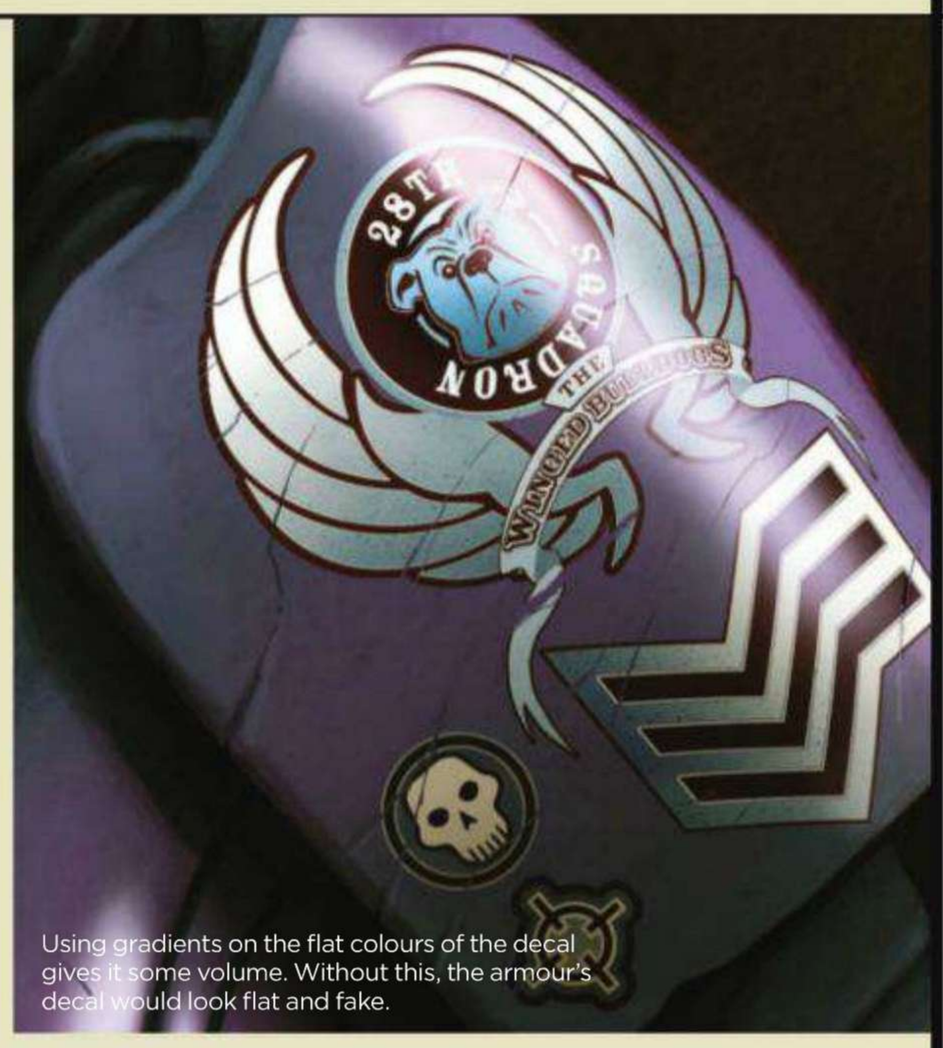
SAVE TIME WITH CUSTOM BRUSHES



Use custom brushes to help speed up your process. Brushes that resemble splatter effects are a great way to create texture in a splash into still water.

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Question
How do I design quick decals to add to military armour?
Olivia Shannon, Ireland



Using gradients on the flat colours of the decal gives it some volume. Without this, the armour's decal would look flat and fake.

Answer
Jonathan replies



First, put together some reference materials to fuel your ideas. What kind of military unit are you portraying? Is it one with a rich history of pageantry, or one that's primitive or tribal in nature? There are millions of images in books and on the internet that have good examples to scan through.

For my design, I begin by making vector design elements in Illustrator. The wings, bulldog, handprint, banner and skull are among many separate graphic elements that I create. Then, referencing what I'd seen in a book, I combine the different pieces to make the Flying Bulldogs insignia. I import the vector art into Photoshop and then skew and warp it to conform roughly to the curvature of the armour plate. To make it look less clean, I place an Overlay texture of lumpy, stippled paint over the design and then begin to try to mirror the distress on the armour on the design as well. Successfully integrating a vector graphic into a painted image can be tricky and it's often best to run a filter on it or dirty it up a bit.

Finally, I add a highlight that's cast over the metal and the paint, which helps to blend the images together.



It's important to make the insignia appropriate to your fiction. This design started out in the same way as the other one, but ended up completely different.

Question
Do you have any beginner tips for using markers and inks?
Douglas Kent, US

Answer
Eric replies



I rarely use markers, but when I do I'll always start light to dark. This is key in my opinion. Markers are a great way to generate quick ideas and then, as you solidify your image, you can increase the level of darkness to start sculpting away a clearer illustration. This is a common practice when sketching out new ideas and concepts, such as alien creatures, futuristic spaceships and undiscovered new worlds.

There are a lot of ways to accomplish an image using an inking technique. I've dabbled in nib, brush and tech pens, and they all yield interesting and very different results. I also feel that you can achieve a range of emotions from inking, and applying them properly is key to success. From heavy blacks to cross-hatching to pointillism, there are a multitude of approaches that you can use.

As you probably know by now, I like to use the KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) approach whenever and wherever possible. These images show some basic inking approaches that I use and find fulfilling.





Here, I thought about my light source, keeping all lines thin towards the light and gradually thickening them towards the shadow or underside.

For this image, I just used a solid, thick outline. This is very Alphonse Mucha-like and I love the simplicity and punch I can get from it.

Question
How do I paint a classic fairy tale-style cottage that has a thatched roof?
Tom McCarthy, England

Answer
Mark replies



The first thing that you should do is gather together reference materials and then figure out what you want the general look and feel of the cottage to be. Do you want it to appear dark and mysterious, or warm and inviting? Much of a scene's mood can be shown by the colours, surroundings and the lighting you choose. For instance, a warm light coming from inside and smoke bellowing from the chimney will instantly make it appear welcoming.

A basic cottage can be made from simple box and triangle shapes, but experimenting with other variations will lead to a more interesting design. I want my cottage to be in a colourful summer setting with lots of vegetation and light. Making it a building that looks lived-in and cared for, and yet shows small signs of wear, will help it to gain some character.

Usually, the thatched roof is the most distinguishing element of a cottage. I have it draped over the structure almost like a layer of blankets, with the straw implied rather than individually rendered. This makes the thatched roof much clearer to read and gives it weight.

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Question
How do I paint baggy clothing such as a pirate's shirt?
Takumi Kawabata, Japan

Answer
Paco replies



Painting a baggy shirt or any other loose piece of clothing can be pretty challenging. Depicting the wrinkles of the fabric properly is the key to painting a loose-fitting shirt, but that's not as easy as it sounds. This is one of those times when photographic reference or a live model comes in handy. Unless you feel confident about what you're doing, try to get hold of some good references before you start – it'll be worth your while.

If you study how different fabrics develop creases in real life, you'll see that even if they never look exactly the same, the folds occur in a similar manner. The fabric can compress, stretch or hang. When you're painting clothes on a figure, first try to think where on the figure the clothing is stretched, compressed or just hanging loose and do a sketch with all the wrinkles in place. Then start giving them volume. It's important to establish a source of light before you start, so you don't get lost when you paint the lights and shadows. In addition, ensure that the fabric looks natural. Not all the wrinkles look the same; they can be hard and edgy, or soft and round.



Notice how different the wrinkles look when they're compressed (the elbow) hanging loose (the arm) or stretched (the fabric in the torso that's stretched by the belt).

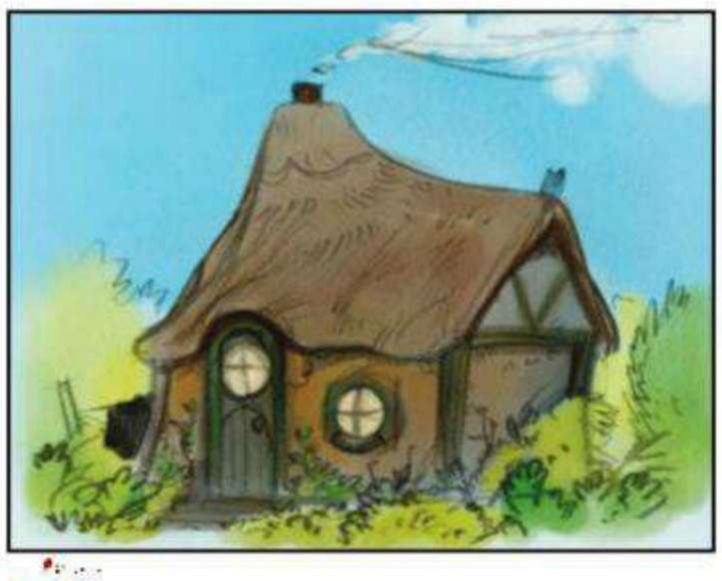
Artist's secret



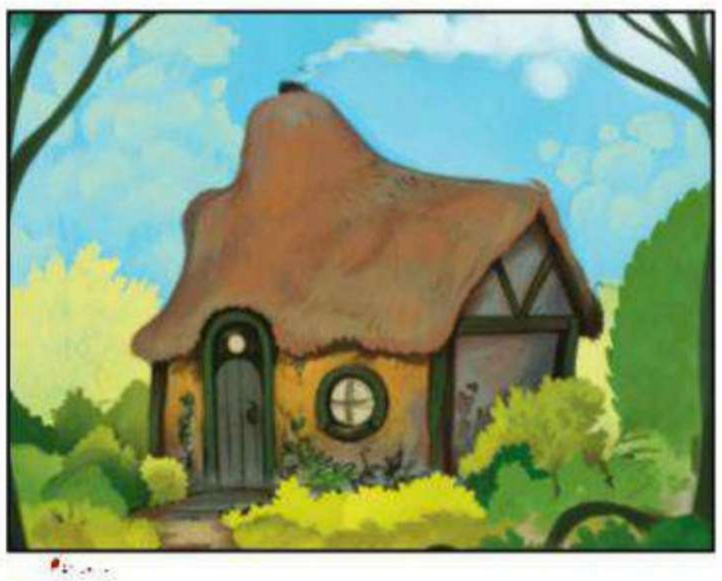
BE BODY-CONSCIOUS

When you're painting an item of clothing, remember that there's a body under it, or else it won't look believable. Draw the outline of the body in an upper layer to act as a guide as you create the garment.

Step-by-step: Paint a chocolate-box cottage



1 After gathering reference materials and getting a general idea of what I want the finished cottage to look like, I sketch out a rough design and then scan it into Photoshop. I quite like this particular building and after blocking in the basic flat colours I decide to run with it.



2 As I begin to add the bushes and grass, I make a start on rendering the cottage. I really want it to fit snugly into the overgrown surroundings, so I bring the bushes right up to the walls and door. Using earthy colours for the cottage helps it to fit in more with its environment, too.



3 Placing a tree on either side of the image frames the cottage and helps to draw in the viewer. It also gives the scene an intimate feeling. Painting in some warm light coming from the window and from the cracks around the door enhances the cosy, warm feeling.

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Question
What's the best way to paint a female face?
Melanie Royce, Canada

Answer
Lauren replies



Even a casual viewer will notice if the face doesn't look right. This makes painting it a challenge. The biggest piece of advice I can offer is to avoid detailing until you have everything else in place. It's the best and easiest way to ensure that the face as a whole looks correct.

It's easy to get lost in the features we consider to be the most beautiful and feminine, such as the eyes and lips, but don't neglect the rest of the face. The nose, jaw and cheekbones also add beauty and definition to a face. It's unnecessary to paint in a lot of makeup on a face to make it more feminine. While visual cues such as long eyelashes, sculpted eyebrows and red lips are hallmarks of a female face, these things aren't necessary to make a face feminine. In fact, it can make for a more interesting portrait without.

When painting a female face, you'll discover that the character's cheeks, forehead and chin need as much attention as other areas, such as the lips and eyes.

Even experienced artists benefit from using reference material for faces. Every artist has a default – we always fall back on the same set of features if we don't pay attention. I recommend building a library of headshots to give you a large sampling pool of how facial features can vary. This will keep your work fresh.



Artist's secret

KEEP IT REAL

Don't be tempted to over-render. Many artists approach the female face with a glossy fashion-shoot mentality, blending everything until the skin is hyper smooth. I think preserving texture and imperfections in a face is the best way to add life and character.



Step-by-step: Paint a classic female face



1 Before you worry about painting a female face, first concentrate on producing a basic face. Decide on a core colour palette for the skin and then block in the colours in a very general way. Now's the time to establish the lighting and basic form of the face. It's important to resist the urge to start detailing the features until all of the basic elements are in place.



2 Begin to render the basic features of the face. I start with the nose because it helps me to establish the angle of the face. From here I work outwards into the cheeks and forehead. For now, I keep the lips and eyes very simple, only indicating the top lid of the eyes and the line of the mouth. I flip the canvas occasionally to ensure that the features are symmetrical.



3 Once the general face shape is rendered, I add the main features of the eyes and lips. Shaped eyebrows, dark lashes and darker eyelids are all things that suggest feminine qualities. Everything fits neatly within the face thanks to the time I spent rendering the bone structure. I blend the skin with a Spackled brush; this gives a great soft texture to the surface.

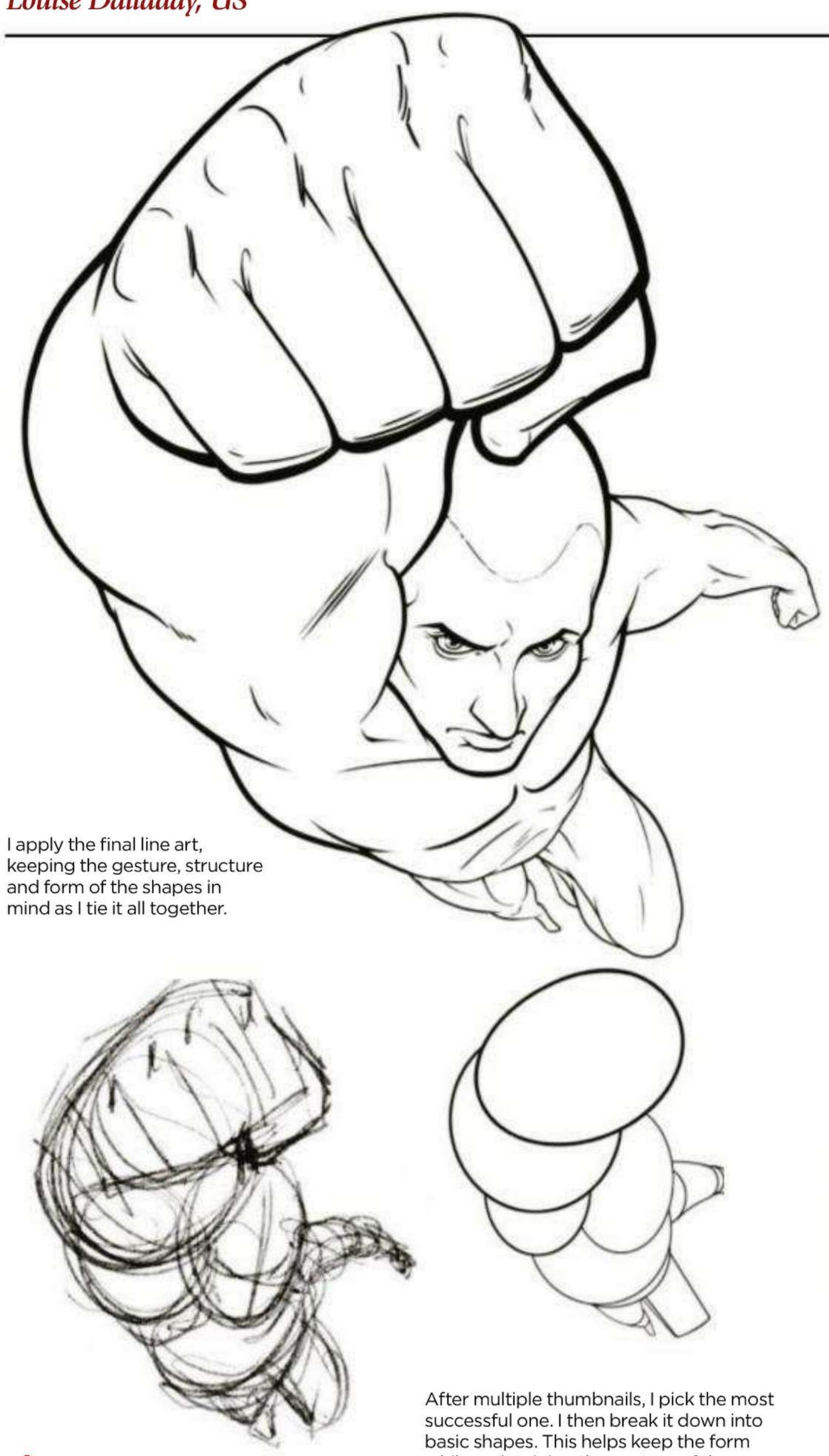


4 I add fine details such as eyelashes, more definition to the lips and, importantly, a bit of warmth to the cheeks. Women are often depicted with a stronger blush on their face than men. You can lightly paint on a saturated orange-red tone by hand, or use the Overlay layer mode on low opacity for quick colour fixes. Overlay also deepens shadows and makes everything pop.

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Question
How do I draw a character who's punching out at the reader?
Louise Dalladay, US



I apply the final line art, keeping the gesture, structure and form of the shapes in mind as I tie it all together.

After multiple thumbnails, I pick the most successful one. I then break it down into basic shapes. This helps keep the form while maintaining the gesture of the pose.

Answer
Eric replies



This is a tricky image to accomplish successfully. Your goal is to convince the viewer that a character is pushing through the page and coming out at them. This is commonly used in comic books and manga, and can deliver a great impact if done correctly.

Illustration is the constant challenge of making a 2D image jump off the page and appear 3D in the viewer's mind. The closer you get to accomplishing that goal successfully, the more believable a character or world you can create and this will hopefully suck the viewer into your story.

The first thing that I concern myself with is the perspective. To keep it simple, I go with a one-point perspective drawing and do my best to keep the structure of the character believable. Perspective is only the first step when considering this image. Drawing a body at a skewed angle requires a good understanding of anatomy and form to make it believable. Photos are a great source of reference as well, if you can find them. At the very worst, you can always photograph yourself.

Question
Is there a straightforward way to paint the face of an owl?
Miranda Robson, Scotland

Answer
Mark replies



Owls are great fun for me to draw because of their variety and striking personalities, and like most things they can be broken down to their few basic shapes. The circles and triangles that make up an owl's face can be manipulated in many ways to change the bird's character, expression or even species.

To better understand their shapes, you should gather and study reference, or even try an exercise where you attempt to draw an owl using as few shapes as possible. Once you have the shapes down, you can begin to fill in the details using them as a base. Building upon the simple framework, you can create pretty much any kind of owl and render it in any style you like.

The eyes are usually the most striking feature of an owl's face, and they can be very expressive. It's fun to mess with the eyes. By making them huge or tiny you can quickly change the personality of your owl. The colours that you choose can also create a lot of character.



I rendered the feathers using a custom brush with rough edges, adding bright white and black speckles here and there.

Question
How do I create modular characters that share assets but look different?
Masey Brown, US





I use a drawing of two different bodies as the base for these game character thumbnails. This way, their proportions are identical, which means that they can share the same rig and animation sets.

Answer
Jonathan replies



The most important element to consider is silhouette; it's what the player's eye will read first. There are many examples of games that have tried too hard to rely on other visual elements, such as texture and colour, and have repetitive characters as a result.

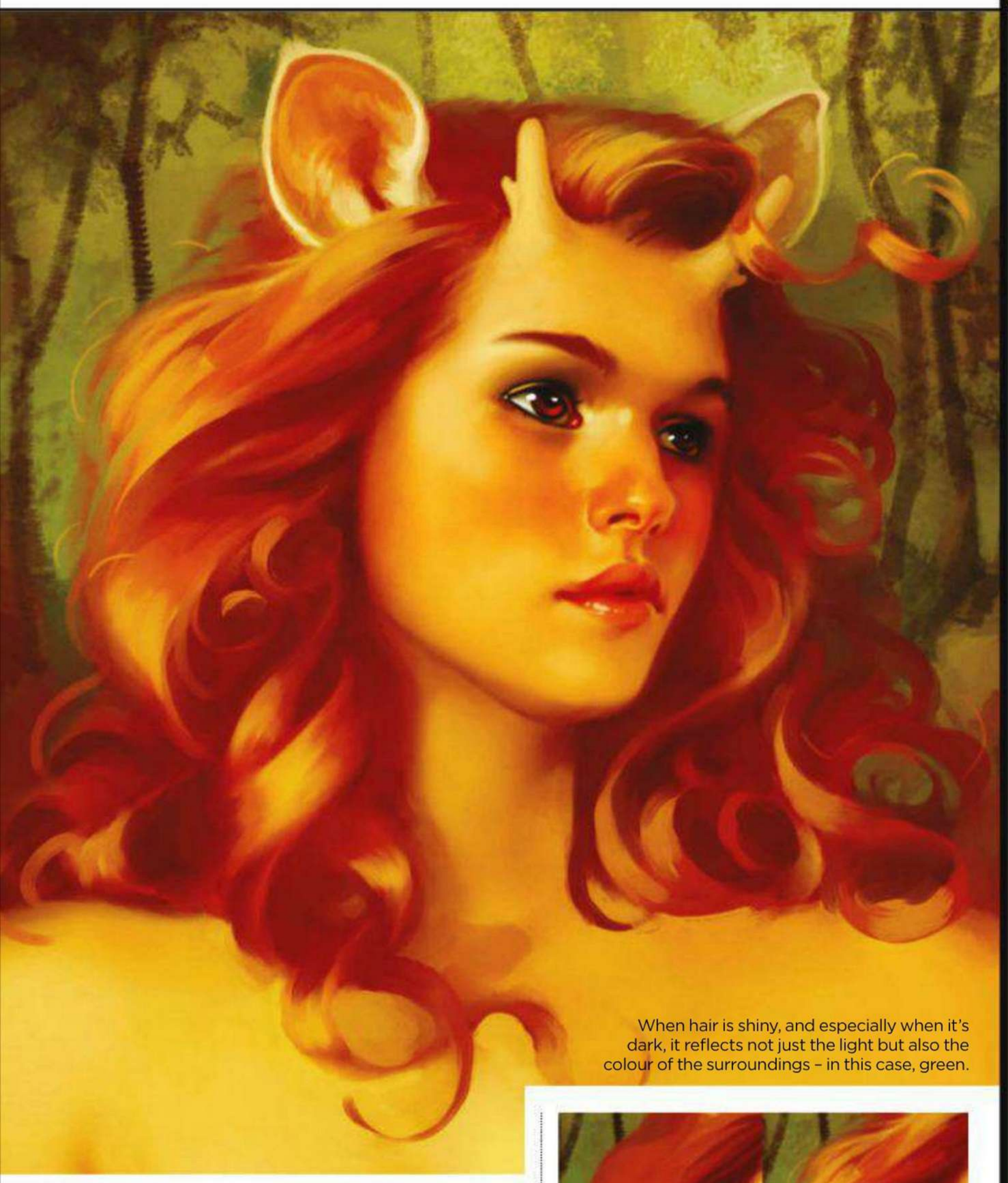
After making your initial thumbnails, it's generally a good idea to find out what parameters the game's engine has for supporting modular characters. It's helpful to have some idea of how the characters will be put together.

Assuming that the engine is basic, I divide up my character into parts that can be joined together. I try to address the character's extremities rather than his torso, which affects his silhouette less.

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Question
Can you recommend any techniques for painting shiny, curly hair?
Kate Anud, England



When hair is shiny, and especially when it's dark, it reflects not just the light but also the colour of the surroundings – in this case, green.

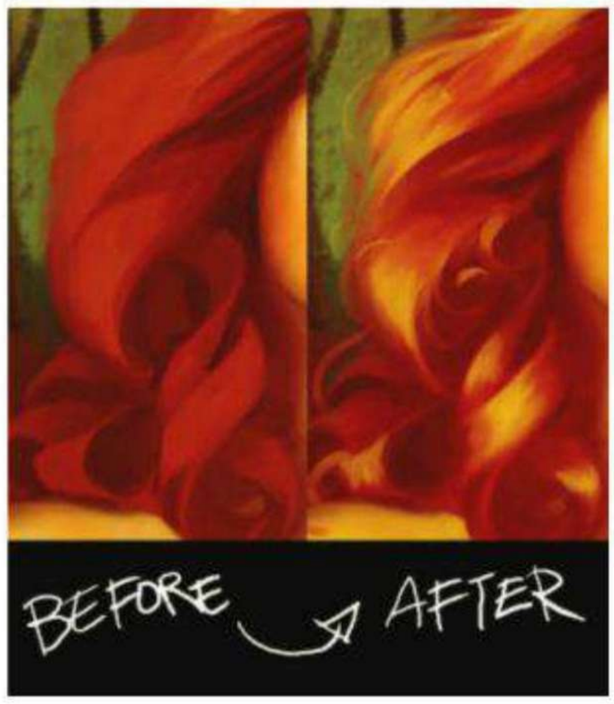
Answer
Paco replies



If you want to paint a curly-haired character in a simple way, a bunch of well-placed brush strokes can do the trick. The challenge comes when you're aiming to create a very elaborate piece.

A good tip to start with is to try to paint the hair as an expressive element of your painting. If a character's hair is an important element of the image, try to give it a shape that benefits the composition, or an expressive look that goes with the feeling of the image. Hair can have almost any shape, so when it comes to painting it, think of it as an ace up your sleeve.

The actual process of painting hair – especially when we're talking about complex, curly hair – is best started by painting it as a solid object. Hairs tend to group together with each other and form different shapes, so before starting to detail individual strands one by one, try to paint them in groups with all the lights and shadows. Imagine that the hair you're painting is made of clay. This will make the rest of the process much easier.



First, I paint a base structure for the hair to avoid getting lost later on in the process, and then I paint the hair texture and reflections over it.

Question
How do I give a bat's ears a translucent look?
Mando Valdez, Mexico

Answer
Brynn replies



Reference will be your friend in this case. Looking at different animal ears with backlighting will inform your work better than anything.

You could start by modelling a small ear out of Sculpey clay and then lighting it from behind. It's important to remember that the bat ear is thin, but it's also filled with blood. When light shines through flesh it tends to glow with orange and red hues.

I start my painting with a pencil drawing to grasp the anatomy of the ear. Next, I move into colour, making sure to keep the middle of the ear the lightest shade. The thinnest part of it will be the most translucent, while the thicker parts, such as the folds, will be darker. Keeping the middle of the ear light pink and fading it to orange gives it a translucent look. For the finishing touch, I add some almost-white light pink to really push the feeling of it being thin skin.

The next step is to work on a separate layer and add some red veins, because they would show up when the ear is illuminated. Finally, white highlights around the edges hint that light is coming from behind the ears.





I begin by laying in basic colour before blending the hues together to give the image a smoother look. The lighter areas will appear more translucent.

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Next month
ON SALE: 18 October
How to easily design an imposing vehicle

Question
How do I convey a character's age in the appearance of their skin?

Martin Faulks, US

Answer
Manon replies



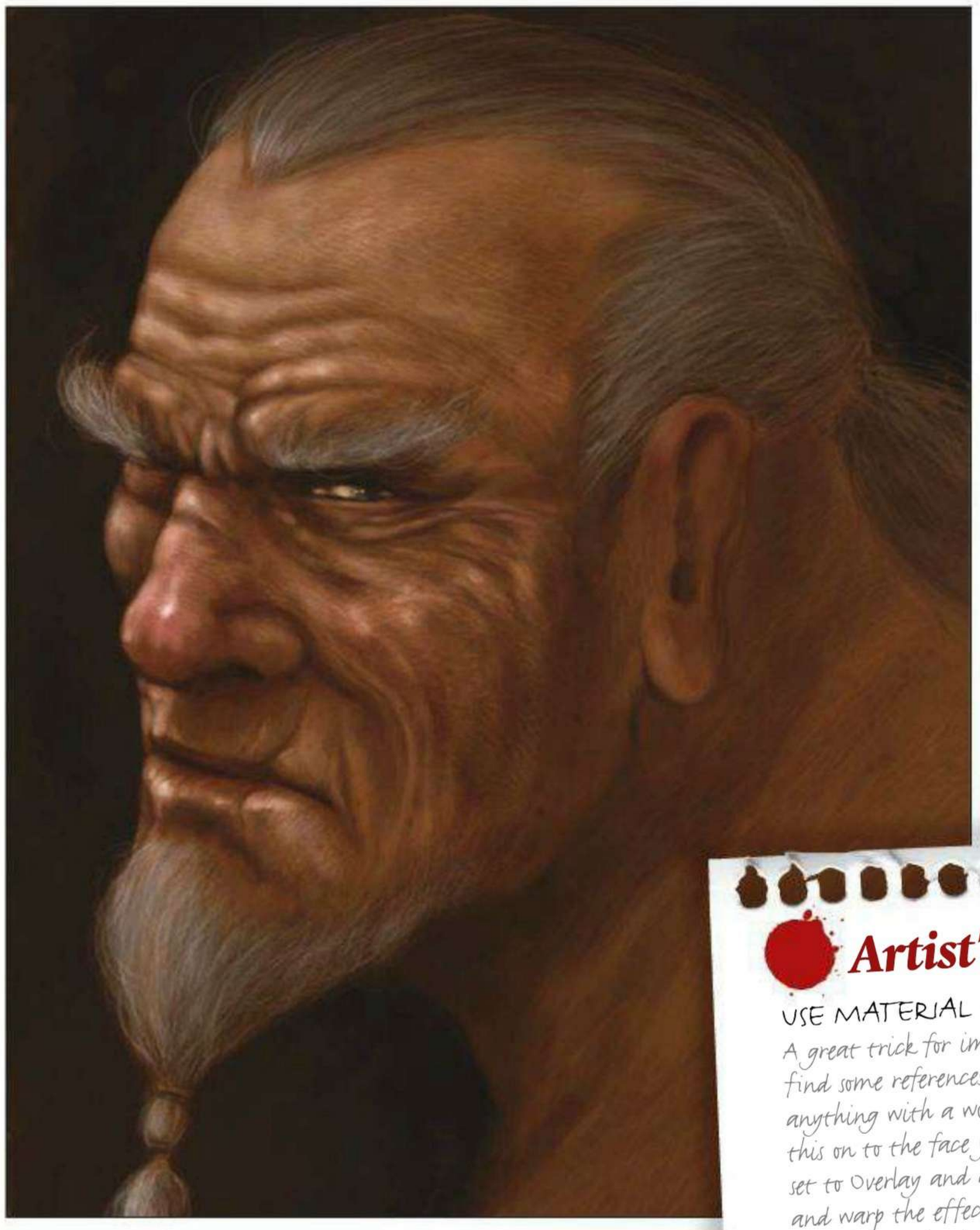
Wrinkles are a dream to paint! In a way, it's much easier to make a believable wrinkly face than a smooth, characterless, supermodel-type visage. The more character there is, the more fun you're going to have with your painting.

It's becoming harder to spot older faces, especially on TV, because people are injecting poison and filler into their faces to make themselves look younger. In fact, they're just going to look less interesting!

When I've been given a brief – or even if I'm just going to do my own painting of a character – I think up a history for the person. Is he a happy fellow? Is he tough or a big softy, or is he an extremely wise hermit who lives on his own in a cave up a mountain? If you don't have a backstory then it's much harder to start to build a believable and intriguing character. This part is heaps of fun.

Another thing I always do is use photo references. I gather pictures of faces, or even places, that might inspire more richness in the story. When you're using reference materials, you also get the bonus of having lighting from a photo to use. Never copy line-for-line, but you'll be amazed at how the reference will help in bringing your character to life.

One other useful tip is to avoid symmetry, because most faces aren't perfect. This will add to the believability factor. The steps below give you some more ideas for how to approach an ageing character. Have fun painting your oldies!



Always think about your character's background. Someone who's spent their life outdoors will have leathery skin from exposure to the elements

Artist's secret

USE MATERIAL REFERENCES

A great trick for improving an aged face is to find some references of crumpled leather, or anything with a worn and weathered look. Overlay this on to the face you're drawing, in a new layer set to Overlay and a very low opacity. Now stretch and warp the effect to fit it to the face. Erase any sharp or hard edges, then continue to paint over the face once you've dropped down the layer.

Step-by-step: Ways to achieve older-looking skin

1 Forget the obsessive youth culture, with people Botoxing all the character from their faces. Instead, relish the chance to show some expression with a lived-in face. Start by looking at some reference of people's faces, and maybe try the odd sketch. Then start your own image and, using what you've learned from looking at these faces, begin to build a character.



2 When skin ages, it tends to become leathery-looking. Gravity takes hold, so the parts that used to be full and plump usually start to sag and hollow out. For instance, the apples of the cheeks often lose their fullness. I decide to create an ageing warrior type who's definitely been through a few battles. He has many scars and tough, leathery skin.



3 Concentrate on where wrinkles tend to gather: the corners of the eyes and mouth are always wrinkled in old people. Foreheads furrow and lips get thinner, and there'll be lines around the mouth. I give my warrior some good scars to give him more personality – imagine the story that your character has lived and use that to bring him or her to life.

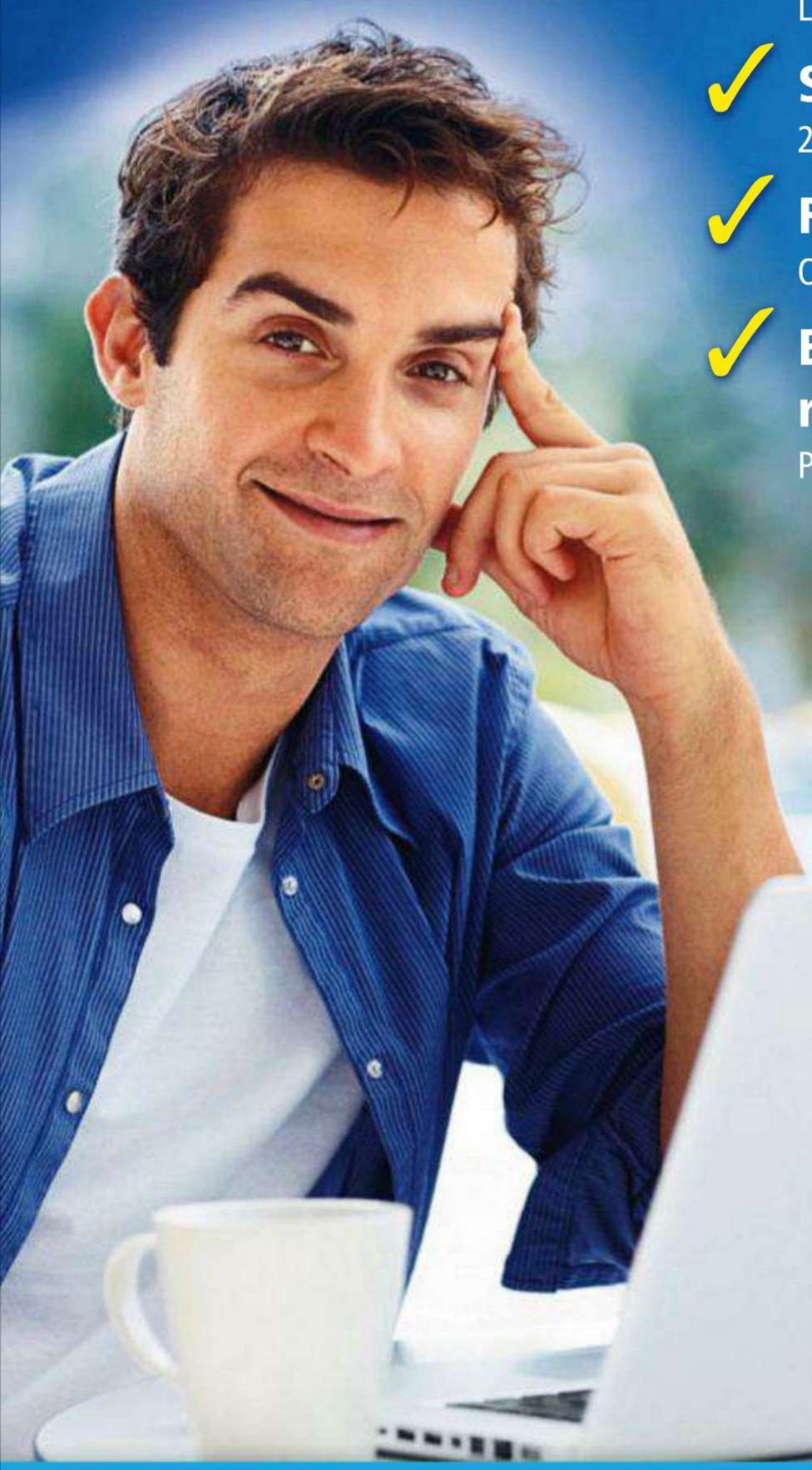


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THE ART OF GUILD WARS

ArenaNet's online opus is much more than just a computer game. We speak to the people behind Guild Wars to discover how and why it's become such a phenomenon in the world of fantasy art

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TIDAL POOLS
Players won't be able to resist the temptation to explore and sightsee, particularly if something resembling this tidal formation by Matt Barrett appears in Guild Wars 2.

"Just ask Kekai about when I said I'd give him 100 pieces of gold in Guild Wars to drink this whole jar of honey," says modeller and concept artist Richard Anderson. "And he totally did it! Yeah, we were committed."

He's thinking back to a period in his eight-year tenure at game developer ArenaNet in Seattle. The creative team would play Guild Wars every lunchtime and after work – it got pretty competitive and a little bit crazy, too. But while they fought it out in settings they helped create, when it came to visualising the game's battlefields the vibe was more collaborative than combative.

Fast forward to the present day, and even though the art team has grown to around 90, the creative atmosphere remains and the company is pushing hard towards the release of Guild Wars 2. It's a big update for the massively multiplayer online fantasy game that's seen the concept, character and environment artists reinvent the Guild Wars world 250 years after events in the first game and its three add-on packs.

Richard has left the Seattle-based developer to work at the Moving Picture Company (MPC) in London, but honey-drinker Kekai Kotaki is now one of the leaders of the GW art team. "There was a nice small company feel here in the early days, but as the company grew in size there had to be changes," he says. "My job has changed throughout the years, from being a texture artist to being a lead, managing a team of artists. We try to keep up a creative atmosphere and people are encouraged to talk and share ideas."

> **"The sense of cause and effect between history, the lore and the current state of the world is established by the visuals"**



The once barbaric feline Charr race has become sophisticated and technological in GW2. Here, artist Kristen Perry has used Photoshop to render the furriness.

THE NEW TYRIA

Of course, the big team is completely necessary for creating the much larger version of the continent of Tyria that

MEET THE ARTISTS OF GUILD WARS



Daniel Dociu

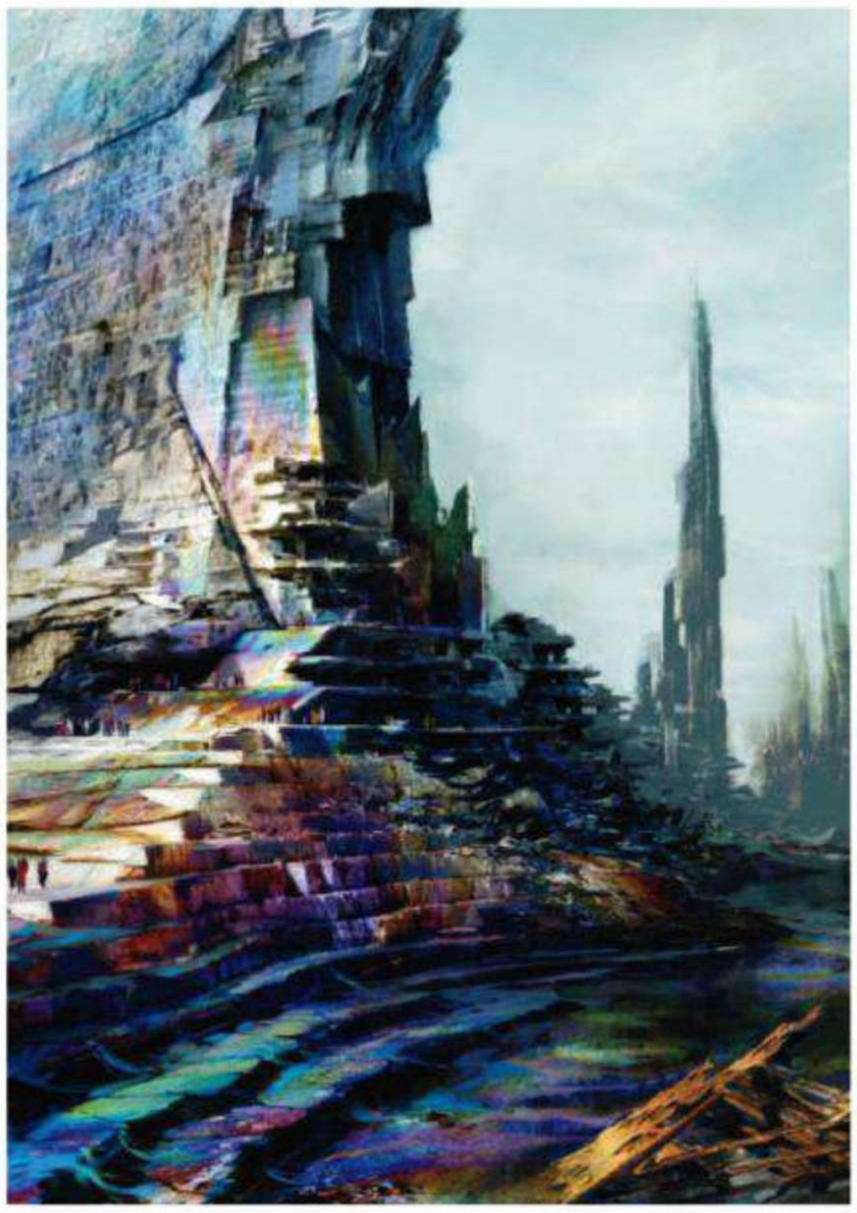


BACKGROUND: *Daniel was born in Cluj, Romania. He moved to the United States in 1990 and has worked at companies including Electronic Arts, Microsoft and Zippernet.*
CURRENT ROLE: *Chief art director.*
FAVOURITE GW IMAGES: *"I couldn't single out one piece or another."*
SUMS IT UP: *"We've made, from the beginning, a deliberate effort to distance ourselves from the competition and we decided that photo-realism would just bring us closer to the middle of the road. A departure from realism is what characterises our game. It's a strongly stylised look with a hand-crafted touch."*



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CORRUPTED
Parts of the old GW world have decayed. Daniel Dociu has set the tone for his team of 90-odd artists with fantastic environmental renderings.



PARADE
This concept piece by Richard Anderson depicts a medieval town and its citadel. The scale and scope of the architecture in GW2 will be extensive and awe-inspiring.



DIVINITY
Culture, architecture and technology are as important in the concept art as monsters and magic to Daniel Dociu. Here a city perches in the foothills, opulence indicated by flags and banners.

GW2 will present. The original title was extensive, had a high-fantasy look to it and pushed well beyond the accepted Tolkienesque themes and imagery seen in so many fantasy games. That world has changed in several ways: some of its races have progressed and some have let things slip, while others have become extinct. The culture, technology and architecture will be recognisable to players, but everywhere it's evolved.

"The sense of cause and effect between history, the lore and the current state of the world is strongly established by the visuals," says chief art director Daniel Dociu. "One of the races familiar to the fans are the Charr: a half-feline, half-human race. In the first game, we established them as invaders or barbarians with a relatively low level of sophistication. In the meantime, they've evolved into a highly technical civilisation."

Daniel is widely credited with how the Guild Wars look and feel has developed. Indeed, many amazing paintings of



ASURA IN THE RUINS
In this image by Levi Hopkins, Asura scamper through ancient architecture in an area that has been converted to wetlands during a period of decay.



Kekai Kotaki



BACKGROUND: *Kekai was born in Hawaii and studied art in Seattle.*
CURRENT ROLE: *Concept art lead.*
FAVOURITE GW IMAGES: *"Snow Battle and Riven Earth are two that seemed to pop off when I was able to show them. They're probably the most popular examples of my compositional work. In addition, my iconic hero designs seem to be around a lot, especially the different paintings of Rytlock, the Charr hero, in Guild Wars 2."*
SUMS IT UP: *"I don't want to stifle someone's creativity when working on a project. 'Go forth and make awesome art' is the motto. I trust the guys to be able to do it."*





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DRAGONBRAND
The angularity of the architecture is one of the subtle ways Daniel Dociu uses to manipulate the player's emotions. You just know this setting is hard and dangerous.

Tyria have come from his own hand. One thing most artists say about working with him, however, is that they have an amazing amount of freedom. Perhaps this is the reason why the likes of Richard Anderson, Kekai Kotaki, Levi Hopkins, Matt Barrett, Aaron Coberly, Jaime Jones and Jason Juan have become huge names not just in gaming, but in the broader fantasy genre.

The open-ended way in which the team operates is what Levi remembers most about the creative atmosphere. "We were able to explore ideas and help contribute to the overall aesthetics of Guild Wars. I enjoyed working on the Guild Wars franchise because Daniel's overall vision strays away from traditional fantasy, which is also in line with what I enjoy. Painting a castle on a green hill with a green dragon and a knight on a horse is not something I'd look forward to doing," he says.

Like Richard, Levi has now left ArenaNet, but he still looks back on the artwork they created with amazement. The fruit of their labours isn't only to be found in the Guild Wars games, either. There are art books filled with imagery from both of the games, even though GW2 hasn't launched yet, and you can purchase Guild Wars posters as well. The title has become as famous for its fantasy art as it is for its gameplay.

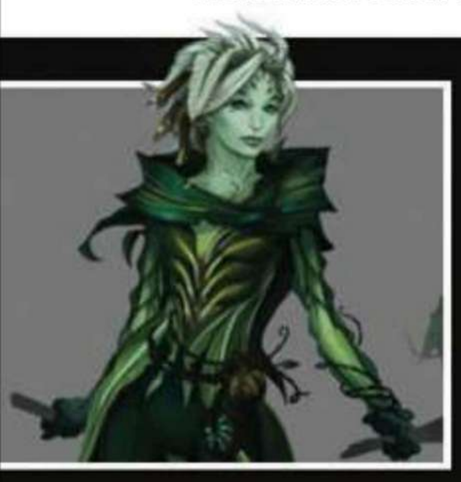
"The walls here at our new space are entirely covered in large canvases with Guild Wars art, so we're constantly immersed in the visuals of this game and I couldn't single out one piece or another," says Daniel when we ask about his favourites. "As a collection, they're more than the sum of the parts, defining and describing this universe that we've come to continually expand and enrich."

The powerful effect that Guild Wars has had on fantasy art isn't only down to the way Daniel has given the artists freedom.

> **"I couldn't single out one piece or another. As a collection, they're more than the sum of the parts"**

He's also given them ownership of various aspects of the game. A character or creature artist, for instance, takes the race or monster they're designing from concept art, through low-polygon modelling, and then into ZBrush for sculpting, before adding textures. The quality of the artwork is their responsibility.

For this reason, each artist forms a bond with their aspect of the game. Kristen



Kristen Perry



BACKGROUND: *Kristen has worked in graphic design and illustration.*
CURRENT ROLE: *Character artist.*
FAVOURITE GW IMAGES: *"The Norn were a lot of fun because everything was finely carved leather with metal fixtures and rich patterns. The Charr, with their very visceral materials, allowed me to explore different definitions of fabric, using thatched reeds and harpoons for the fisherman and wrought metal muzzles for the butcher."*
SUMS IT UP: *"I'm really interested in seeing what the players come up with using our customisation options in GW2. We have many features that will enable players to exercise their creativity."*





BEHIND THE SCENES

KEKAI KOTAKI

We talk to the concept art team lead for Guild Wars 2 about his career with ArenaNet...

How did you end up doing artwork on Guild Wars?
I was born and raised in Hawaii. After graduating high school, I moved over to Seattle in 2000 to attend the Art Institute of Seattle. Sometime after finishing up art school, I finally landed my very first video game art job at ArenaNet in 2003. I started out as a texture artist doing terrain tiles, but I was able to move up and now almost eight years later I'm the concept art lead on Guild Wars 2.

What kind of look did you aim for with Guild Wars?
We were trying to create great art – whether or not it was fantasy didn't really play into it. We were trying to find new ways to express the core ideas that make up the fantasy genre. If anything, it was similar to the way Magic: The Gathering does it – do something cool and awesome no matter the subject. I've always tried to add that hard edge to my work; to make things cooler, full of motion and emotion.

Does playing the game inform your approach to the art?
I'm a player, but not to the extent that I'd be considered a full-on gamer. It's valuable as a concept artist to be able to step back. I think of it as designing monsters that fight heroes and heroes that fight monsters; everyone needs to be the hero in the game. More important, everyone needs to feel like they're the hero in the game.

What are the challenges on GW2?
The designers gave us the freedom to do whatever we thought was cool. GW2 takes place 250 years later, so things change. The challenge was operating with this freedom and getting that high level of work done without falling on our faces. Also, there's always the pressure of what we're going to do next.

How will it differ from the first release?
Guild Wars 2 is more action-oriented. Restrictions on art have been loosened quite a bit, enabling us to explore and get some epic moments into the game. This also meant we needed to up the quality level on all fronts, from characters and creatures to the environments. Everything needed to be bigger and better. People are going to be running, jumping and dodging – we needed to develop the game with that in mind.

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> We needed to up the quality level on all fronts, from characters and creatures to the environments. Everything needed to be bigger and better

CHARR LAND

An early concept developing what the lands of the Charr would look like, by Kekai Kotaki. It was created before the decision was made to add machinery to the Charr architecture.



SNOW BATTLE

Fans have responded well to images such as Kekai Kotaki's Snow Battle. The billowing clouds of snow behind the invading force loom over their onslaught.



KODAN

"This was a concept showing off the bear-like Kodan next to another race," says Kekai Kotaki.

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ORRED TENTACLE
Levi Hopkins has helped shape the world of Tyria with his impressive environmental art skills.

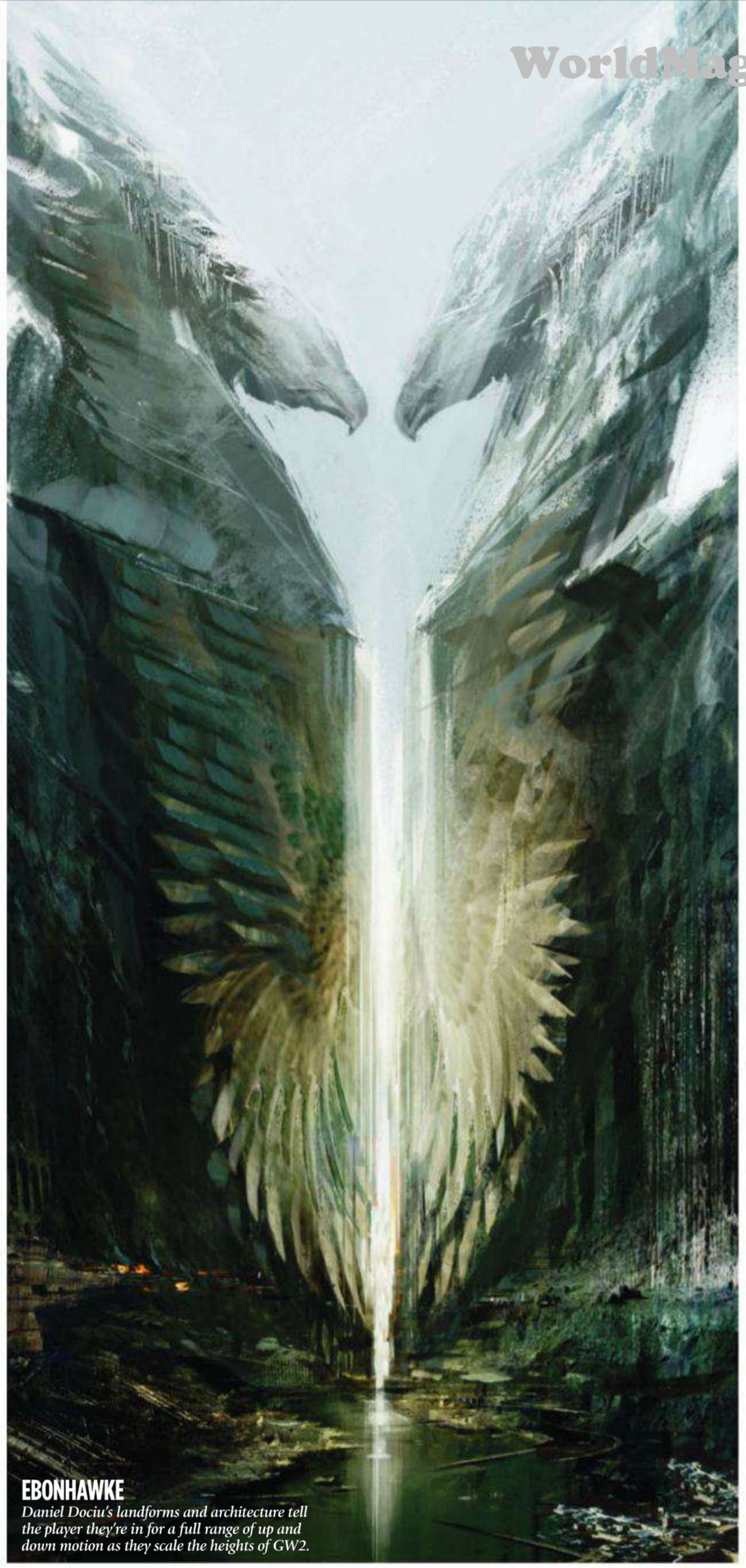
Perry worked on the Sylvari race and designed their iconic hero, Caithe. Working in Photoshop, she paid a lot of attention to details such as fabric textures.

"Her shoulder wrapping and helm intentionally mimic a thief's hood in silhouette, when placed together," she says. "Her trappings grow close and tight to the body, and the leaf tails of her coat resemble blades. I really enjoyed putting character details into much of her design, including cat-tail dreadlocks. I made a big point of conferring with the writers and designers for the feel of her character, and I think the concept result conveys her personality pretty convincingly."

A CONSISTENT WORLD

With each artist having so much freedom and ownership, Guild Wars could easily have fallen flat on its face as a game. So perhaps the real magic is in the subtle consistency Daniel has managed to bring to the title, across its many releases. The environments are incredibly varied, but feel real enough not to jar with the player. Gamers don't seem to tire of exploring.

Making a world many times larger – or more epic – than the original has ramped



EBONHAWKE
Daniel Dociu's landforms and architecture tell the player they're in for a full range of up and down motion as they scale the heights of GW2.



Levi Hopkins



BACKGROUND: *Went to ArenaNet from high school and started as a 3D environment artist.*
CURRENT ROLE: *New opportunities in film and fantasy art.*
FAVOURITE GW IMAGES: *"I don't mind doing characters, but I tend to stray away from armoured, male Fabios. I enjoyed any environment where I was given a lot of freedom to explore multiple pieces within the region. If someone told me a region was just full of dirt I could sit there for days and explore multiple ideas, and love every minute of it."*
SUMS IT UP: *"We all ended up sitting in the same room along with a bunch of other great guys and chaos pretty much ensued."*



Richard Anderson



BACKGROUND: *Born in Montana, Richard moved to Seattle to study.*
CURRENT ROLE: *Works at MPC in London.*
FAVOURITE GW IMAGES: *"The cinematics were fun for GW2. It pushed me and I learned a lot from it, but a big highlight was when I got the chance to concept something in the game. Before I was a modeller. Daniel gave me an assignment to design the god statues for GW1, gave me a whole brief and everything, and it was super fun."*
SUMS IT UP: *"I feel blessed and very lucky that I even got a job there, I was given an opportunity to be pushed, learned and worked with some amazing artists."*

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COMING TO LIFE
Inanimate wood becomes a creature thanks to a druid's powers in this Kekai Kotaki masterpiece. The 'guilds' of the title form teams within the game – like orders of knights.

up the complexity of the artwork. As a result, maintaining consistency has been tough. Matt Barrett has been with ArenaNet for over five years and much of that time has been spent on GW2. "My drive has been to make sure that Guild Wars 2 is the sort of game I'd find rewarding to explore," he says. "Some hardcore players may get a kick out of the game no matter how it looks, but I don't want to leave my fellow peacenik dawdlers with nothing to look at.

"Guild Wars 2 is enormous. It's just really, really huge," Matt continues. "Keeping a consistent view of the project from one end to the other has been a difficult challenge, and sometimes I come across artwork I'd done years ago that I wish I could change, because I've grown as a designer in that time."

The size of the game is one thing, and the fact that it's accompanied by great concept art and graphics is another. But the most important facet of crafting a game is in how people actually engage with the world. Daniel wants GW2 to be an emotional journey for the player, and the artists and designers he oversees aim to manipulate the player's feelings visually. Partly, the secret is in how you enable the player to move around and the level of excitement can then be controlled by how platforms, ledges, ravines and meandering paths are positioned in the game.

> **"We constantly remind ourselves to think in terms of visual language, of articulating a statement"**



Kristen Perry gets so into her creations she names them. Audrey is part of the Sylvari race.

TELLING THE STORY

It's also about more subtle aesthetics. "Inducing emotion though visual storytelling is the end goal," says Daniel. "We constantly remind ourselves to think in terms of visual language, of articulating a statement. Three-dimensional geometry translates into shapes, shaders bring colour and texture, lighting means value, and layout implies composition and spatial relationships. Modulating the level of intensity, alternating climactic peaks with breathing breaks, creates rhythm."

As hard as the artists are working to get GW2 out, the one word they've all mentioned to us is love. This is probably the real reason Guild Wars has been so successful. "The passion we're all putting into it, the fact that we all deeply care and don't treat this as a job, but rather as an opportunity to express ourselves artistically, is what comes across in the final product," says Daniel. "It's hard to put your finger on it, but I do believe that if you pour your heart and soul into an entertainment product it comes across. It's what makes the difference between a dry, sterile, over-engineered product and one that lives and breathes and is rich and juicy," he says.

What else could make someone finish off a whole jar of honey?

Matt Barrett



BACKGROUND: *Matt studied drawing and painting in Texas.*
CURRENT ROLE: *Characters and creatures.*
FAVOURITE GW IMAGES: *"The big one would be the Asura race and their material designs and architecture. They're originally subterranean, sort of feline-reptilian creatures with an innate mastery of natural materials and energies, and thus are decidedly full of themselves. I chose Dravidian temple architecture as a starting point, for its sheer complexity as well as its subterranean themes."*
SUMS IT UP: *"I can't think of anything more satisfying than making art with friends."*



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Andrew Jones, James Gurney and Marta Dahlig are just three of the artists who share the secrets behind their distinctive art, while top art directors reveal what they look for in a portfolio – get yourself on the fast track to that dream job! And a reader receives one-to-one tuition in Art Class.

Issue 71 July 2011



Once your eyes have recovered from seeing our Brightest Cover Ever!™, learn how to paint dynamic manga characters and panels. We also cover concept art, Photoshop textures and filters, and painting the clothed figure in our packed workshop section. And find out what's new in Painter 12!

Issue 72 August 2011



Pore over film concept artist Bobby Chiu's marvellous creature design cover workshop, discover how to turn a 2D design into a 3D character, how to add beauty to fantasy, then paint fur, scales, feathers and other detail with our fantasy creature special issue. Plus: the Massive Black studio laid bare!

Issue 73 September 2011



Create a radiant mermaid with Mélanie Delon, learn how to render real skin tones and paint like Frazetta. It's a fantasy special for our Q&A section, which covers everything from painting chain mail to fiery dragon breath. We also speak with the famed artist and designer Roger Dean.



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Afton Kern

Inspired by school and now embarking on her college years, Afton shares some of her many fantasy sketches

Artist PROFILE

Afton Kern



Afton's started attending Cosumnes River College, in Sacramento, California, with the aim of working full-time on concept art, comics and children's books. It's not just her art classes that have inspired her sketches. "I've always taken advantage of every subject," she says. "From US history to biology – they've all been incorporated into my art."
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BABOON SKULL

"I drew this from a baboon skull in class. I feel it's important to understand the anatomy of an existing animal by observing the skeleton and the skull, as they provide insight to their form and function."



SAVAGE DRAGON

"I've always loved dragons, and I wanted to draw this as I thought it would look interesting."

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FLYING

"One of my characters flying alongside a fulmar."

JESUS

"I sketched this from a statue of Jesus. To me, religion and science help unify our understanding of the world; they're like yin and yang and balance each other."



IRON MAN

"Iron Man's suit reminds me of the exoskeleton of an arthropod, and has some features of a giant isopod. I love to draw my own interpretations of a character or an idea, rather than imitating."

SOLIFUGID ARMOUR

"This is my concept of a suit of armour. It has a mandrill's face in the centre, below which is a solifugid, a desert-dwelling arachnid."

"I love to draw my own interpretations of a character, rather than imitating"

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VAMPIRE CREATURE

"I used pencil on marker paper, which is very smooth and great to draw on. I also used features of arachnids for the limbs of this creature."

CYBORG

"I referenced a photo of one of my favourite German singers to help me create this sketch."

BUDDHIST STATUE

"I found a photo of a Chinese statue of a mythological deity and sketched my interpretation of it."

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GIANT ISOPOD

"I sketched an Aztec statue at the De Young museum and drew a character with wasp and isopod features. The dragons are based on mandrills, one of my favourite animals."

"The dragons are based on mandrills, one of my favourite animals"

Want to share your sketches? Or know an artist you'd like to see featured in Sketchbook? Then drop us an email at **sketchbook@imaginefx.com**, or upload your sketches at **www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook**.

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THE ART OF LUCAS GRACIANO

From sketching for dollars at theme parks to winning a Chesley Award for his video game art, this artist is full of character...



"It comes down to hard work and mileage," declares award-winning fantasy artist Lucas Graciano as he's pressed to give us one easy step to improving your painting. "Unfortunately, there's no one 'trick'," he continues, sharing his belief in hard work and perfecting the fundamentals of painting. "Build as solid a base as possible and it will keep you more stable down the road," says the artist best known for his work on video games such as Legends of Norrath, World of Warcraft and God of War, as well as fantasy book covers and trading cards.

Despite winning numerous awards and plaudits in recent years, Lucas remains humble when it comes to his origins. With no formal training – "mediocre at best", he says – Lucas took to drawing caricatures at theme parks and local events in the San Diego area as a means to an end, to get any work he could in the art industry.

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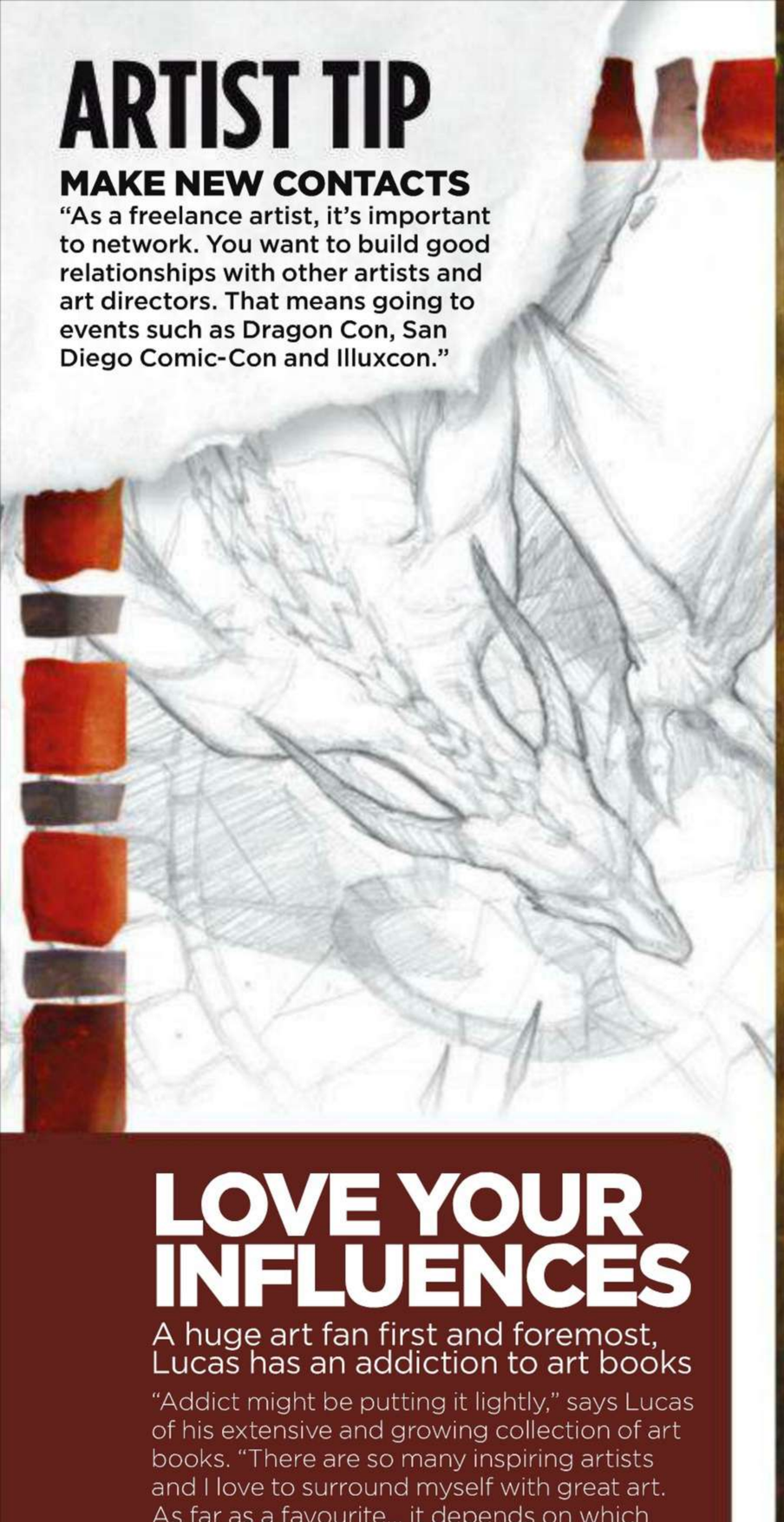
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ARTIST TIP

MAKE NEW CONTACTS

"As a freelance artist, it's important to network. You want to build good relationships with other artists and art directors. That means going to events such as Dragon Con, San Diego Comic-Con and Illuxcon."

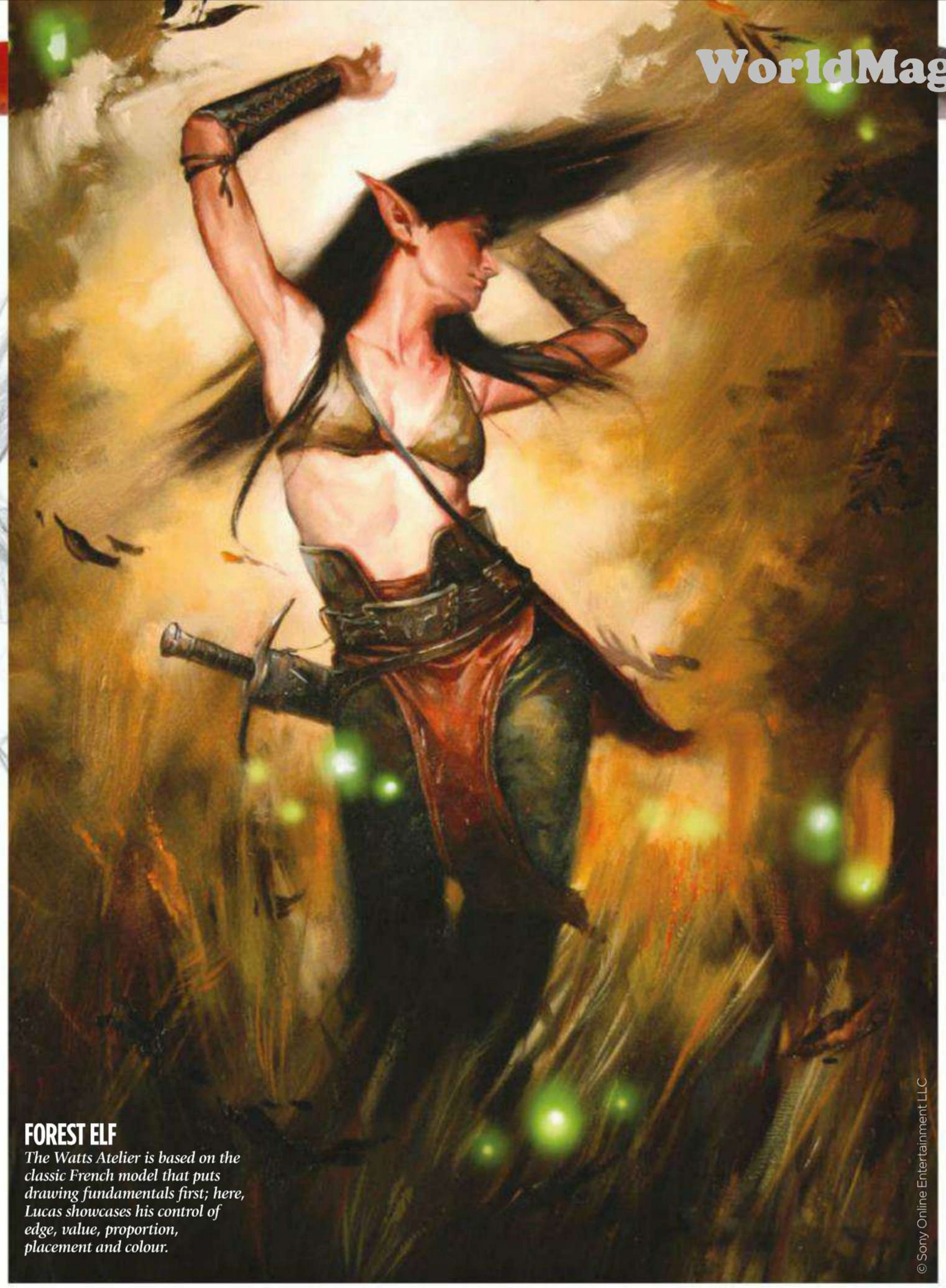


LOVE YOUR INFLUENCES

A huge art fan first and foremost, Lucas has an addiction to art books

"Addict might be putting it lightly," says Lucas of his extensive and growing collection of art books. "There are so many inspiring artists and I love to surround myself with great art. As far as a favourite... it depends on which day of the week."

One artist who does feature heavily in Lucas's work is the late Jeffrey Jones. "An amazing artist," chimes Lucas. "For me, he captured a mood in his work that I can't begin to comprehend. His work is the kind you'll see in museums in the not-too-distant future. He'll be greatly missed by many."



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FOREST ELF

The Watts Atelier is based on the classic French model that puts drawing fundamentals first; here, Lucas showcases his control of edge, value, proportion, placement and colour.

Even at such an early stage in his career, Lucas's work was being spotted. After winning multiple awards at the 2002 National Caricaturist Network competition, he was directed towards the Watts Atelier to hone his drawing skills. At the time the Atelier was a small, low-key school, but its reputation was growing. After four years of taking classes, Lucas was asked to teach – while still a student – at the Atelier, and share his techniques and insights. "I love being able to share what I've learned and help others to achieve their goals," says Lucas earnestly. "It's very rewarding when you see a student work hard and have it pay off for them."

LEARN THE BASICS

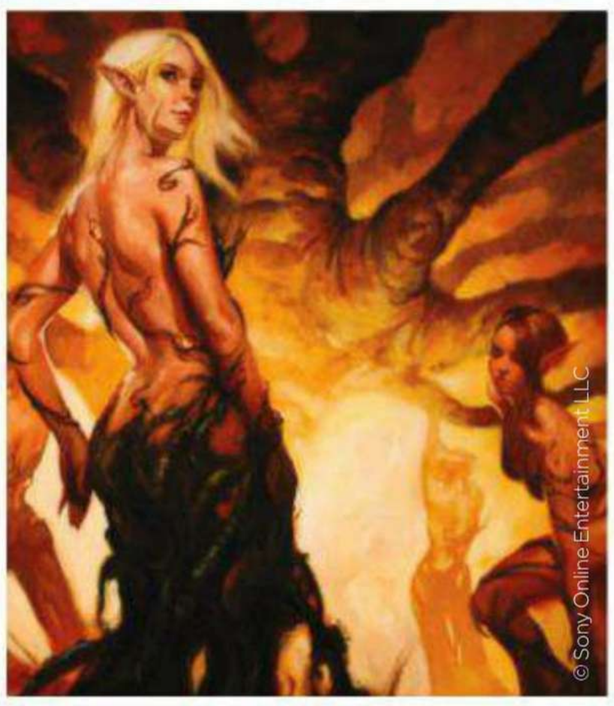
Being able to teach from experience means a great deal to Lucas. He's a champion of learning the basics – even if your aim is to paint fantasy book covers, a lesson in still life painting can help greatly. During such studies with tutors including Meadow Gist and Jeff Watts, Lucas says he was able to gain new levels of dexterity with a brush and experiment with his painting, pushing and pulling an image in all directions with room for error.

As the artist's teaching commitments grew, so did his confidence. Soon, Lucas was balancing time spent with students alongside new projects for book publishers and video game developers. Getting into book cover illustration was always a goal. "One of the first major cover jobs I got was with award-winning art director Lou Anders," says Lucas. "Hitting this goal was a pretty big deal for me".

It's easy to see why the artist has been so successful in recent years. He paints in

VALE MAIDENS

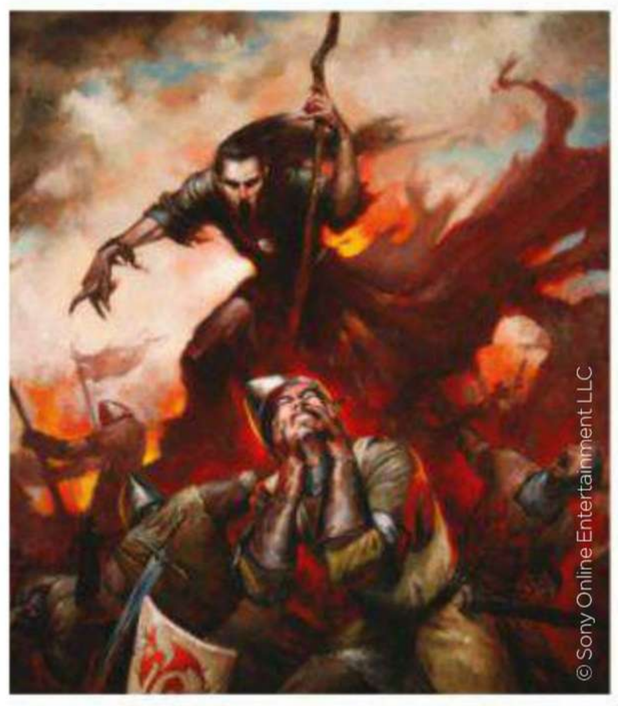
Lucas says that 90 per cent of the time he uses photo references to bring his paintings to life, and will often get his friends and wife to dress up in costume as well. It's all in the detail.



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WORD OF PAIN

Lucas uses a self-created 'influence map' to find new inspiration. "It forced me to think of some of my biggest influences," explains the artist.

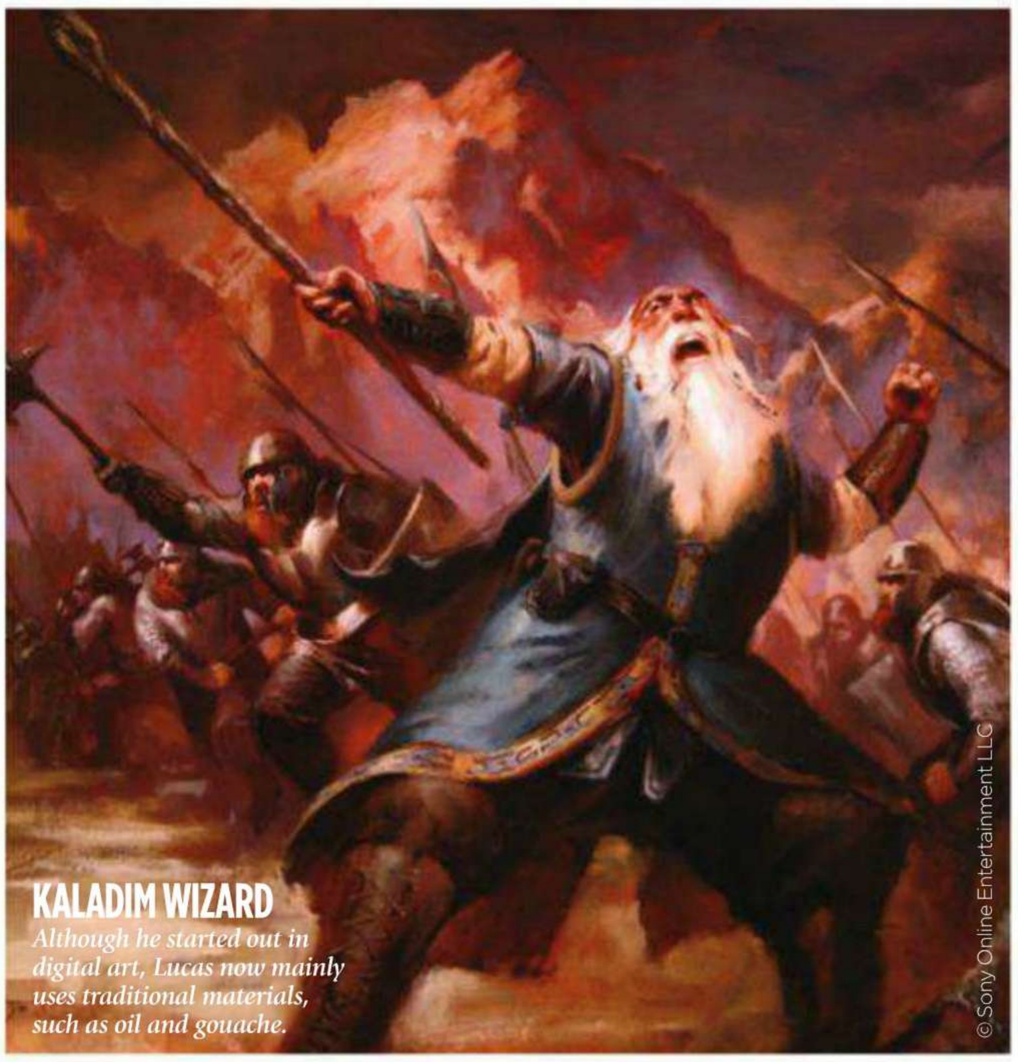


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KALADIM WIZARD
Although he started out in digital art, Lucas now mainly uses traditional materials, such as oil and gouache.

TEMPLE GUARDIAN
Lucas believes learning from the masters is essential. This painting's mood and background were inspired by a visit to the Getty Museum for an exhibition of orientalist painter Jean-Leon Gerome's classic works.


© Sony Online Entertainment LLC

AMBUSH FROM THE TREELINE
Painted using oil on masonite, Lucas's Ambush draws on his love of the masters to construct an engaging composition.

Silverwing for Sony Online Entertainment's Legends of Norrath video game. "Oh man, that win was unexpected! There were some major contenders for that award," exclaims Lucas, before adding humbly: "I was just happy to be nominated." The Silverwing piece has proven to be one of the artist's more popular works, garnering praise from fans and critics alike for, as Lucas recounts, "the strong graphic read and intense sense of energy to it."

TRADITIONAL CHAMPION

Unusually (especially for the video game industry, where he's carved out a reputation for striking, original concept art and narrative mood pieces), Lucas works mostly in traditional paints and techniques. When quizzed on whether there's room for traditional art in the concept industry, Lucas is quick to draw attention to artists such as Syd Mead, Iain McCaig and Nathan Fowkes, who have been working traditionally, at least in part, in the movie and game industries for a long time.

"They're each a perfect example of someone who's very successful with it," a dark fantasy style with a grounded feel – "subtle on the colour and exaggeration of design," according to Lucas. His art is on trend, being bold and fantastical, but subtle and believable. It's meant awards have come thick and fast, but of them all Lucas says entry into Spectrum for the first time early on in his career still ranks as a moment to treasure. "I'd been collecting that book for a long time and I knew that was the book to get your work into," says Lucas as he recalls the moment he heard the good news. "I remember my friend, EM Gist, broke the news to me in class one night. I had a smile on my face for the rest of the evening."

> **"Digital is more practical in the video game industry, but it's more about the artists' skill than the medium they use"**

More accolades followed, including a Chesley Award in 2010 for his painting says Lucas. "Digital is definitely more practical in [the video game] industry, mainly for speed and how easy it is to fix mistakes, but I think it's more about the artists' skill than the medium they use."

It also seems the wider world is catching on to the draw of traditionally created video game art. An established exhibition of video game artwork called Into the Pixel premiered at this year's E3 show in Los

LUCAS GRACIANO VITAL STATISTICS

"The tallest and the fastest!"



Date of birth
11 October 1979.
Current location
Oceanside, California, US.
Average time spent on a painting
It could be anywhere from 10 to 40 hours and more – it depends on how complicated the piece is.
Favourite artists
Jon Foster, Phil Hale, Justin Sweet, Jeffrey Jones, Frank Frazetta, Norman Rockwell, Jean-Leon Gerome, Morgan Weistling, Mian Situ, Dean Cornwell, NC Wyeth, and the list goes on.
Best time of day to paint
I usually paint during the day, and sometimes at night when my deadlines are tight.
Favourite theme park ride
The tallest and the fastest!
Most difficult part of a dragon to draw
I think the hard part is finding new angles to show a dragon from, because it's all been done!
Materials used
Oil paints
Web address
lucasgraciano.com

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ARTIST TIP

PROMOTE YOURSELF PROPERLY

"Make sure you have a strong portfolio. Quality is better than quantity when it comes to your portfolio. Be professional when promoting your work. Visit blogs and forums such as conceptart.org, theartorder.com or muddycolors.blogspot.com. Each of these blogs and forums has a wealth of information and people who are willing to help you get better."

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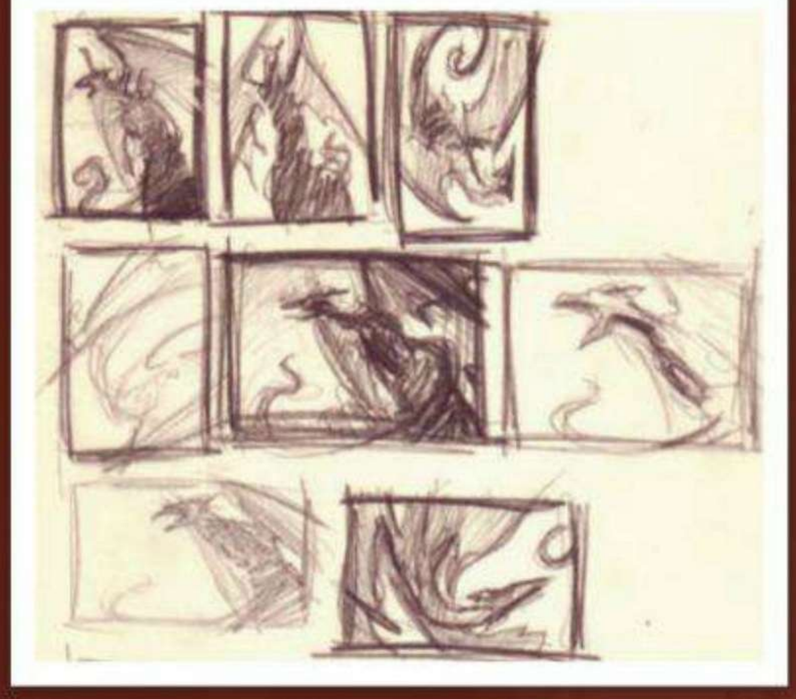
SILVERWING
This image won Lucas a Chesley Award. The artist began the final painting by getting rid of the white of the surface to give an early impression of the values and colours.

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CREATING SILVERWING

Lucas reveals the processes involved in creating a Chesley Award-winning painting



Thumbnails

"Like most illustrators, I start with simple idea sketches. I'm mainly looking to exhaust my possibilities. It's rare that I go with the first sketch I do, but it takes those not so good ideas in the beginning to get to the good ones."



Rough sketch

"I blow the thumbnails up and put a piece of tracing paper over them. It can be difficult to capture the same charm in a thumbnail if I redraw it. I then go on to doing a more detailed sketch. I figure out forms, perspective, detail, and so on – enough information that the art director can get a clear idea of what I have in mind."

Reference

"Once my rough sketch is approved, I move on to finding references. I'll hire models, dress up friends or put myself (or my wife) in costume for the figure reference I need."

Final drawing

"With all of my collected references, I do a final drawing. This one has the level of detail we'll see in the final painting. I work out the rest of the kinks in this drawing."

Final painting

"After transferring the final drawing onto a surface, I start laying in large, thin areas of local colours. I then pick an area, usually the focus, and start rendering. I mostly work in tiles, shapes of colour and value butted up next to each other to roll form. I'll then go back over these tiles, softening some edges to get a smoother look. From here, it's a matter of putting in the hours until the painting is finished."

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Angeles, and Lucas won entry with his painting Amorphous Drake from Legends of Norrath. "One of the great things about the exhibit is that it promotes fine art from the video game industry and recognition for games as an art form," states Lucas.

The Into the Pixel exhibit aims to present video game art as an art form in its own right. It's been a conversion within video games for some years that as times change is now breaking out into the mainstream. Artists such as Lucas are taking down barriers with their paintings and he's well aware of the changing perceptions of his work, and changes to his art. "I strive to push the quality of my work in composition, rendering and storytelling," says Lucas. "So in that sense, I think it's very necessary for an artist to change."

FULL CIRCLE

That's not to say Lucas will be straying away from what he loves any time soon. Dragons of all shapes and sizes dominate his portfolio. He draws them because they're fun, but also, says Lucas, he loves dragons because "there are endless possibilities with their designs." He adds: "I always have fun composing them in an image. Their wings can make for some great graphic shapes."

Now an established freelancer – his client list reads like a who's who of fantasy illustration – Lucas always has room for more dragons in his work. While you'll find commissions from Wizards of the Coast, Blizzard, Sony Online Entertainment, Upper Deck, Pyr and White Wolf all vying for his attention, Lucas is still committed to teaching at the Atelier.

> "I strive to push the quality of my work in composition, rendering and storytelling"

Echoing the Watts Atelier motto that "there is no shortcut to experience", Lucas encourages his students to avoid easy options. He believes that the industry is becoming a harder place to ply a trade, for everyone new to and experienced in fantasy illustration. "There are more and more artists who are getting solid training and have very strong drawing backgrounds," comments Lucas. "I think this is going to lead to a strong surge in quality artists. So the competition will be fierce for new artists trying to break in. The bar will be placed higher each year."

Far from fearing the competition, Lucas is in a position to intensify it, demanding that the next generation of artists excel and, in turn, force those artists – even ones with multiple awards on their shelves – to raise their games. "It's definitely a challenge trying to keep up with all of this new talent," says Lucas. And he should know – they're his students.

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Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: FEUDAL JAPANESE MERCHANT

Having never taken a design from the silhouette stages through to a final rendered image before, **Jack Eaves** challenged himself to do so by creating this merchant character from feudal Japan. Here are the results...

Artist PROFILE

Jack Eaves

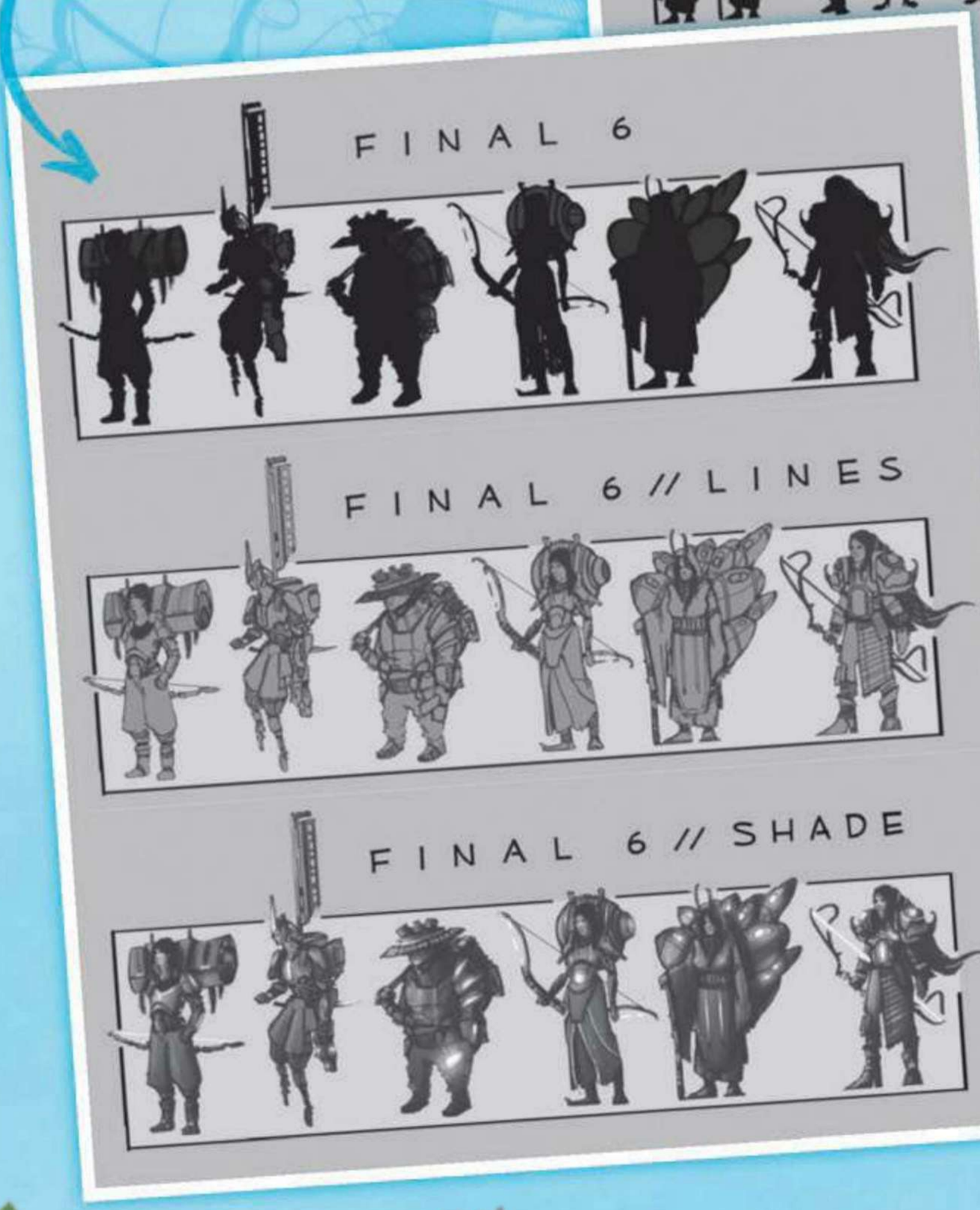


Jack is a 19-year-old student from Bristol, England, studying design for games at Plymouth College of Art. When not studying he freelances as a concept artist at deVoid Studios and elsewhere. He's also mentored a weekly digital art session and assists on an introduction to digital concept art course.
artofjackeaves.daportfolio.com

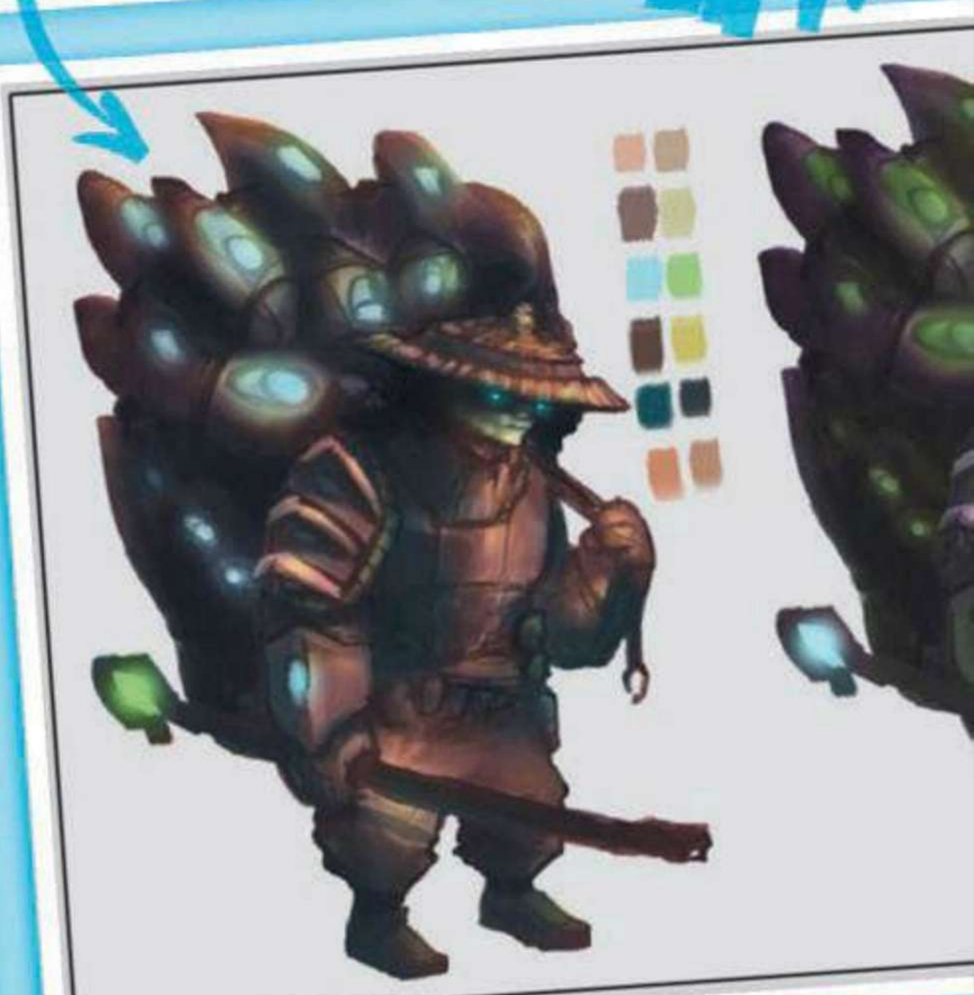
Silhouettes Here are a bunch of silhouettes I did for the initial design of the feudal Japanese merchant character. I set myself a sci-fi theme and wanted to design both a male and a female character.



Line development With my objective set and some initial silhouettes to choose from, I decide which of my six favourite designs (three male and three female) to explore further using lines and light/shadow.

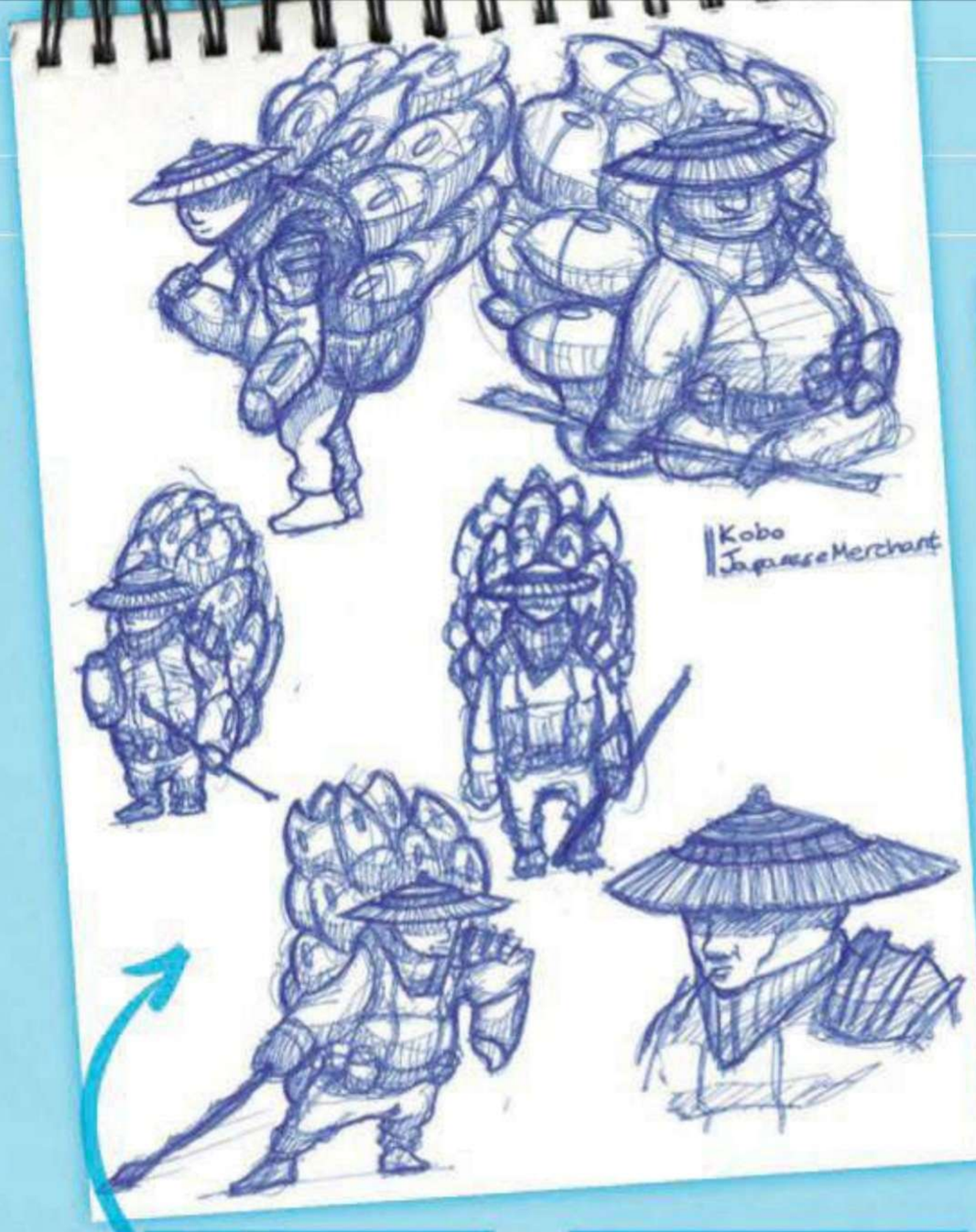


Best of the lot I can't decide on just one favourite, so I merge two designs – numbers three and five – to try to create the most suitable one for my objective. Next I take the rough sketch and overlay some very over-the-top colours, to see what works well together, and to explore possibilities for the final colour of the character.



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Character exploration Before I start on the final design, I want to explore the character some more, and perhaps find a more suitable pose, too. I do this ballpoint pen sketch to take a break and see if anything new appears on the page.

Final revision Now I lock down the design. I choose to stick with the original pose I drew, because I feel that it's fitting to display the whole design better without any obstructions. I really like the idea that my character would carry all of his possessions on his back, at all times – he's a traveller and therefore doesn't have a home to store things. So I expand on the luggage on his back to really emphasise this. It also provides an interesting design element.

Once the design is locked down I add in my chosen colours and shades of light and shadow, to communicate the materials and refine the forms and details of the character.





SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

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LET US KNOW! Email your WIPs and final images to: **develop@imaginefx.com**

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FXPosé Traditional

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

Heather Theurer
LOCATION: US
WEB: heathertheurer.com
EMAIL: h_theurer_artwork@yahoo.com
MEDIA: Oils



Heather has a love "for all of God's creatures," and some of her very own! "As well as painting from real life, there's a great deal of creative freedom in painting fantastical creatures like dragons and faeries, drawing heavily on my wildlife and figurative painting background to bring them into the real world," she says.

Old Masters such as Michelangelo and Rubens, as well as more modern Masters like Bouguereau, Wyeth and Rackham are a constant inspiration to Heather. She's also working on writing and illustrating her own children's books. For more on that, see page 26.





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1 DRAGONFLY
36x36in, oils on canvas
"After waking up from a most glorious dream where I felt I was flying, my first thought was, 'Whoa! I've got to get that feeling on canvas!' Thus, this painting was created, and it was just as enjoyable to paint as it was to dream."

2 GAME OF CHASE
48x24in, oils on canvas
"Here's the winner of the Silver Award in the 2010 Spectrum Fantastic Art competition. This painting was all fun... and who will win this game of chase? Interesting note: more than 10 different animal species were used as reference for the dragon alone."

3 TEMPTATION
24x48in, oils on canvas
"This is one of my newest pieces and one of the most symbolic. Temptation (the Dragon), very craftily inspects every angle of the woman in the centre to best find her weakest point. She, however, is confident and prepared to meet this menace: with a Sword of Truth, Shield of Faith, Crown of Virtue, Wings of Grace and a Solid Foundation."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Heather's anatomy skills are evident in her classic yet varied dragon designs. But it takes an inventive mind to paint a dragon flying upside down – no wonder she won a Spectrum award!"
Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

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Michael DaCruz
LOCATION: US
EMAIL: michaelson2240@yahoo.com
MEDIA: Pencil, acrylic washes



Michael officially turned to the world of fantasy art after a disappointing encounter with an art teacher. "When I was taking my senior thesis for illustration my professor – who was a big editorial and magazine illustrator – opposed me going off into the domain of fantasy," he says. Michael was having none of it. "After being fed up with having to change my thesis on a daily basis I decided to go my own route."

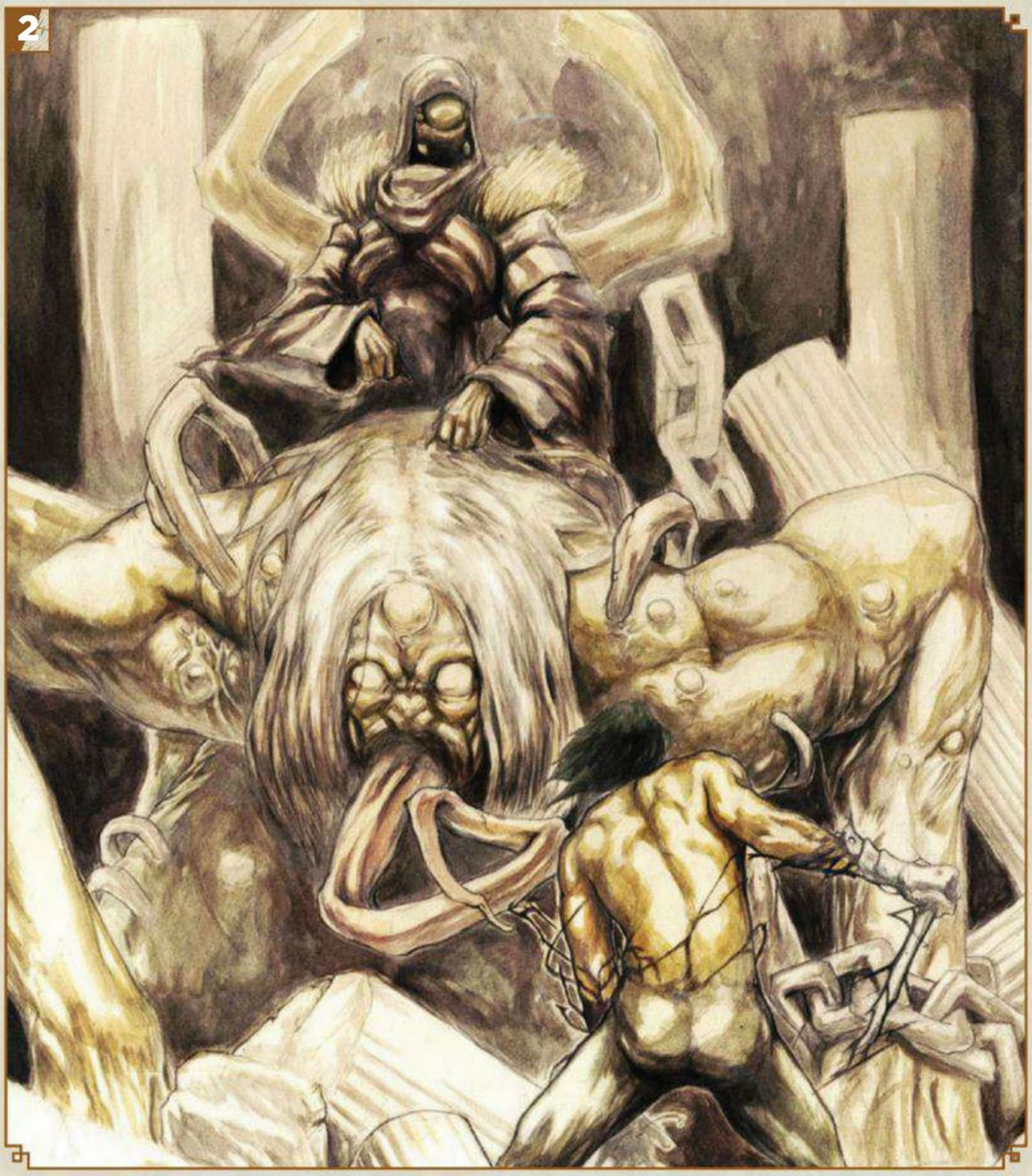
He decided to commit to the medium of fantasy so fully that his professor couldn't simply disregard it aesthetically or technically. The result was a resounding success, as evidenced in these images.

1/4



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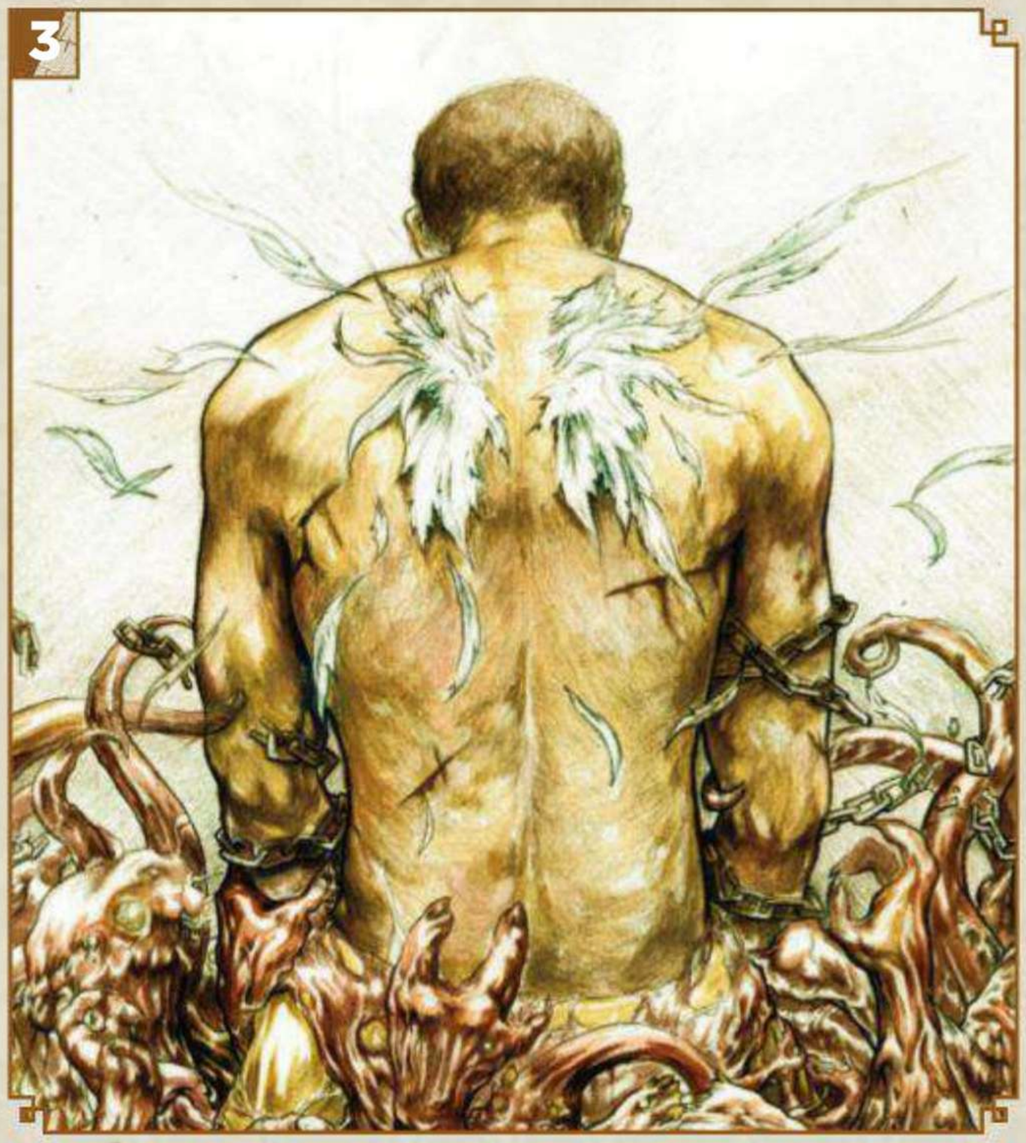
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1 THAT'S NOT FUNNY
13x18.5in, pencil and acrylic washes on board
"This is one of the last pieces I did during the first half of my senior project and probably one of the most enjoyable ones to work on. It basically depicts a small girl taking advantage of her guardian's inability to physically keep himself together."

2 BLIND KING
13.25x17.75in, pencil and acrylic washes on board
"I wanted to depict the protagonist opposing death. The blind king riding upon the back of plague amid a pile of rubble was something that came to me relatively quickly and I wanted to keep the image simple, contrasting with the fantastic nature of the characters. Over the years I've found that going overboard with amazing imagery tends to kill a lot of the appeal in fantasy."

3 GRIP
12.5x18.5in, pencil and acrylic washes on board
"This was the follow-up image to Blind King and was a way to tell my professor that I was taking the fantasy route and I wasn't planning on turning back."



SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

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You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them.
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image courtesy of **Ruoxing Zhang**

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See page 114 for full DVD contents

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

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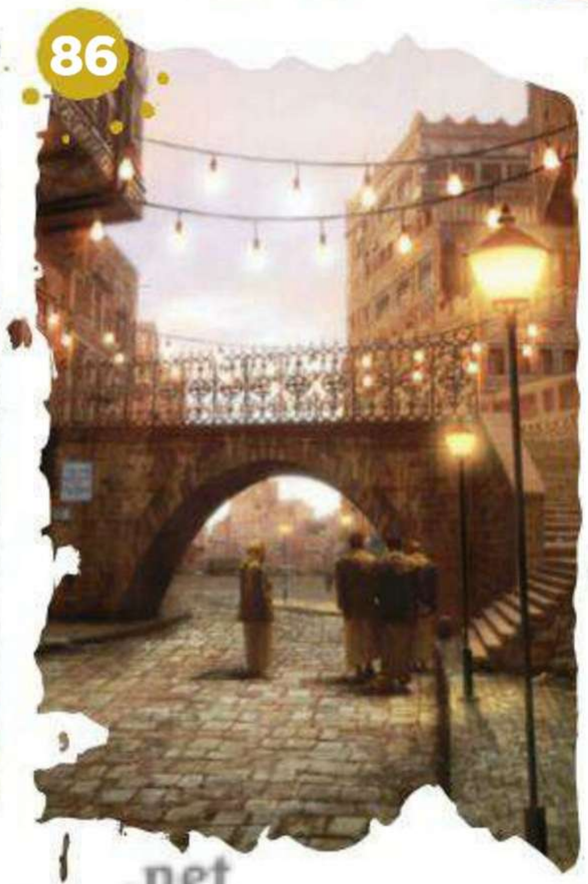
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Advice from the world's best artists









This issue:

74 Paint an epic alien battle scene
Discover how to get close to the action as Luke Mancini creates a tough, vivid clash.

78 Bring someone else's concept to life
Working to defined rules can be tricky, but Igor Kieryluk shows you how to embellish an existing character easily.

80 Design a space opera princess
Kevin Chen explains how a bold personality and simple silhouette will help to make a character memorable.

86 Set the scene for a video game
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95 Work with special effects
Use Painter 12's functions to produce intricate effects and more, with Simon Dominic.

98 Create lifelike cloudscapes
Maciej Kuciara reveals his top tips for filling your skies with atmospheric clouds.

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Photoshop

VIDEO WORKSHOP ON THE DVD

Discover how to get close to the action as **Luke Mancini** creates a vivid clash between two powerful combatants

Your viewpoint in StarCraft 2: Wings of Liberty, the real-time strategy game, is an isometric bird's-eye one. This works wonderfully for masterminding your opponent's defeat, but it can leave something to be desired from a more dramatic artistic perspective. To this end, I've decided to show a single moment in the midst of a battle. The image is of an encounter between a Protoss Archon – a massively powerful warrior – and the most terrifying strain to come out of the Zerg swarm; the Ultralisk.

My aim is to capture the unrestrained energy in the seconds just before the two warriors collide, and emphasise the contrast between the feral, organic power of the Zerg beast and the pure, focused energy of the Archon. While battles in StarCraft 2 regularly involve hundreds of units, I'll focus solely on this duel, relying on close cropping to suggest that there's a greater conflict surrounding them.

Artist PROFILE

Luke Mancini
COUNTRY: US



Luke is an Australian concept artist who moved across the world to sunny California to work at Blizzard Entertainment on the video game StarCraft 2.
mr--jack.deviantart.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Luke Mancini folder in Workshops.

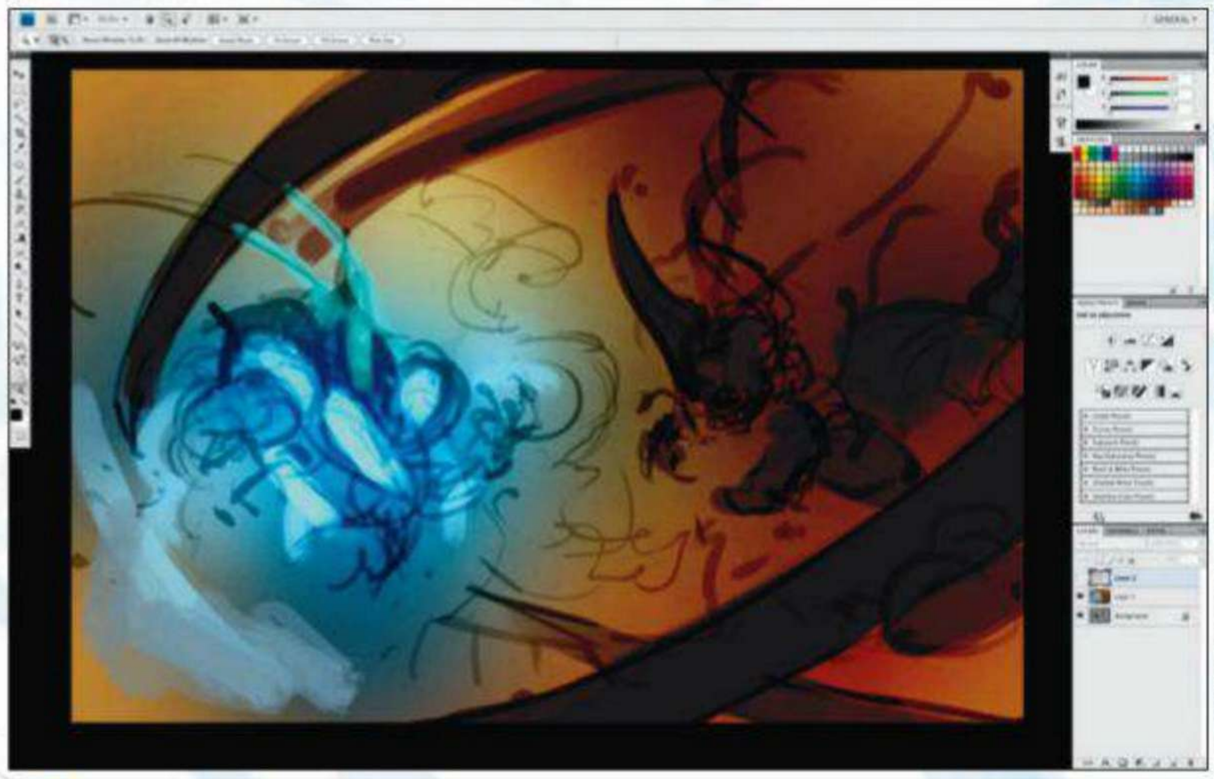
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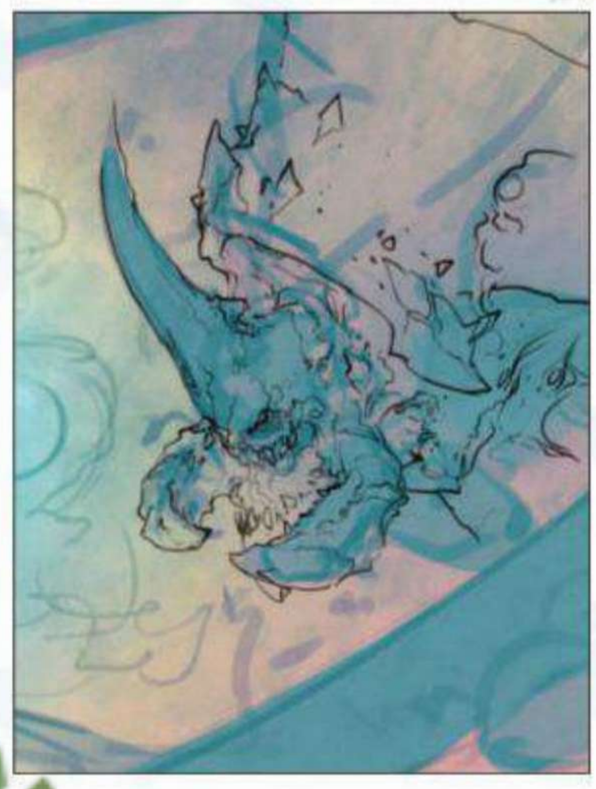
1 Rough it in

I start with a quick rough sketch to get the composition sorted out, and after doodling around a bit I settle on a shot that gives the two characters a roughly even presence in the image, while still emphasising their dramatic difference in scale. I keep my strokes broad and loose at this stage to try to capture the energy that I'll aim to maintain all the way to the final stage.



2 Lay colour in early

I already have a fairly strong idea of where I want to go colour-wise, but I need to lay it in as early as I can to see if it's going to work. I darken the sketch layer so it receives colour better and then block in my first pass on a Linear Light layer. The blending mode I use here varies from piece to piece, but will always be an Overlay type because this enables you to push lights and darks with the colours you're using.



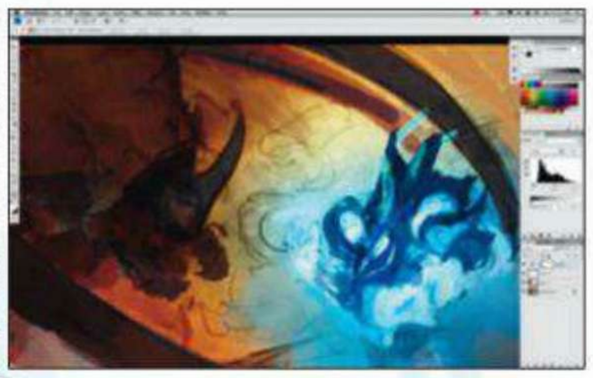
3 Start working in some of the details

Once the basic colour stage is complete, I go back in to add some more details over the top. Since the rough sketch that I drew of the Archon and Ultralisk in step one is so basic, some more decisions about the design and composition need to be taken before I can make a start on the painting proper. I add a white layer at around 80 per cent opacity, just to be able to see where I'm drawing, and then I begin to flesh out their details in linework. At this early stage in the painting, I'm still not going too far with the detail – I'm focusing on the main points of interest and leaving it looser towards the extremities.

PRO SECRETS

History eraser

Holding Alt/Option while using the Eraser tool enables you to erase on your current layer to an earlier version of your image – set the destination in the History palette to any point in your process to clean up new work easily. You can also set your undo levels quite high and your History Options to Automatically Create New Snapshot When Saving to make full use of this tool.



4 Tighten the underpainting

After that, I delete the pale layer and start refining the colours underneath in a new Normal layer to match the decisions I've made with my line work. I start thinking about the lighting directions here, though I'm not doing anything too dramatic in that regard in this image. I want a general 'sun' light over most of it, with the energetic blue glow from the Archon supplying a dramatic second light source.

5 Begin to paint

Now I begin the stage that takes up most of the work in an image such as this – rendering it! Working over the top of the tighter lines, I start painting, trying not to go too high with highlights. I'm focusing on getting the forms reading right at this stage. It's better to get this all worked out first and then add your brighter specularity and lighting later, to make sure it stays consistent.



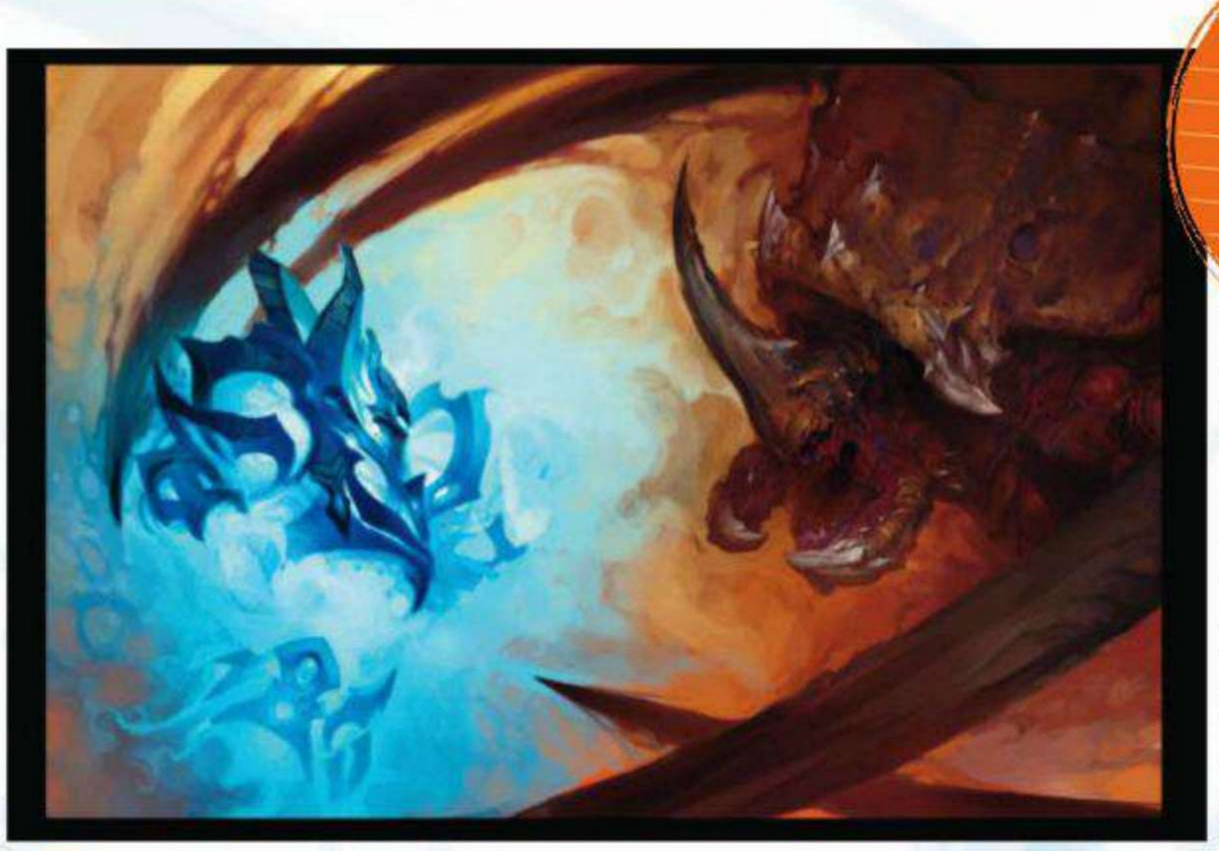


6 Continue to flesh out the details

I normally try to avoid painting in effects so early in an image, but considering that the Archon is a being of pure energy, some of that needs to be taken into account at this stage. To that end, I compromise between rendering some of his armour as if lit by the general scene light, and having the rest illuminated by his own glow and silhouetted by the bright cloud of energy.

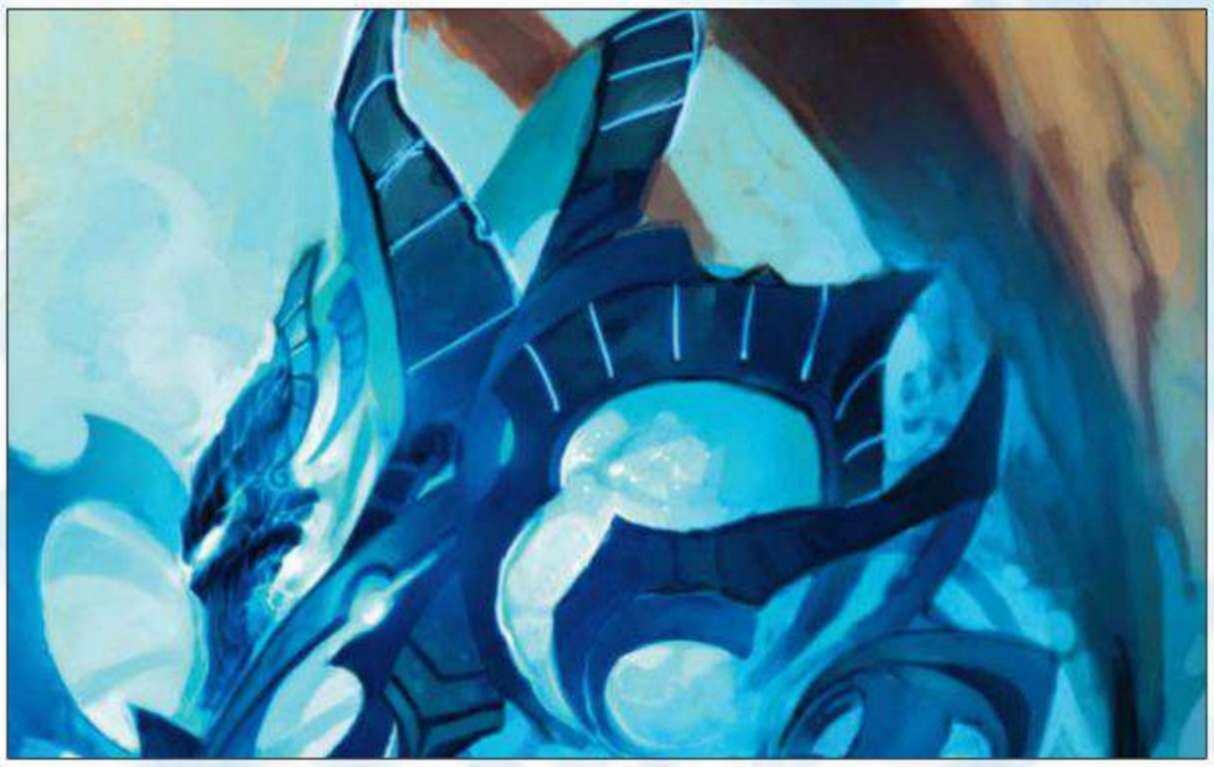
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7 Work out the background

Before I start on the effects stage I want to get the image feeling more whole, so I move on to the background in order to pull it together. With a smeary opaque brush and judicious use of the Smudge tool to keep a sense of movement, I roughly paint in the swirling energy around the Archon and the hooked claws of the Ultralisk, which form something of a frame for the centre of the piece.



8 Get energised

Once the Archon's armour and basic cloudy glow are all painted in, I can start working on the psionic energy that surrounds him. I use a new layer set to Linear Dodge with a dark blue Outer Glow also set to Linear Dodge to start painting in the energy lines on his armour. Depending on the colour underneath it, a Linear Dodge layer can be very harsh, so I stick to quite dark blues at this stage to stop it blowing out to white.

9 Pushing the Archon's energy

When I've got the surrounding glow painted just how I want it, I start to work on the energy that forms the Archon. This creature embodies the pinnacle of the Protoss's psionic technology, so the energy is a key feature. Using the same layer, I paint in his hands and the power arcing off and between his armour plating. At this stage, I also use the Gradient tool with dark blue at a very low opacity to push the saturation around the character. This helps to emphasise the brightness of the Archon's glowing energy, enabling him to really appear to pop out from the page.



Shortcuts

Copy merged

Shift+Ctrl+C (PC)

Shift+Cmd+C (Mac)

Separate, transform and adjust areas of a layered image without flattening it.

ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SMEAR

I use this to paint clouds, glows and effects. This soft, oily brush gives a subtly painterly feel that's a great choice for creating backgrounds and blending.

SQUARE

The angle jitter on this brush can give more life and texture to your painting than a regular round brush. I use this brush for the majority of the painting in this piece.

10 Details and light

Now it's time to go back and finish off the rendering on the Ultralisk and pull the piece together. On a new Normal layer I add specular highlights and finish details such as his eyes, teeth and some extra spikes. I also add some secondary blue lighting from the Archon's energy, which helps to pop his face and upper shell out from the background.

11 Final effects

Using two new effects layers with the same Linear Dodge layer properties as earlier, I add the rest of the energy effects: the Archon's bolt of psionic lightning, the transparent tendrils extending from his armour, and a second pass of blue lighting across the Ultralisk. Again, it's important here to use dark colours in this layer so that these effects don't wash out.





12 Tweak, texture and sharpen

As a finishing touch, I add a low opacity Overlay concrete texture over the image to provide some grain, and use a Levels Adjustment Layer. Both of these I mask off to be stronger over the Ultralisk, where the contrast needs to be pushed further. The last step is to flatten the image and apply a light Unsharp Mask filter, which tightens the edges and some small details. This can be important when using softer brushes in the painting process.

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Photoshop & ZBrush

BRING SOMEONE ELSE'S DESIGN CONCEPT TO LIFE

Working within defined rules can be tricky, but **Igor Kieryluk** shows you how to embellish an existing character with ease



Simple texture

The texture on this piece is achieved using a slightly modified Chalk brush and a soft-edged Spray brush with various textures turned on. As with most of my works, a lot of the good-looking effects show up by themselves after I colourise the greyscale image with a combination of Hard Light and Vivid Light layers.

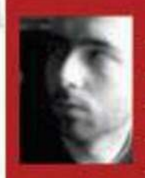
Pyramid head

The boomerang head proves to be a tricky subject, so I employ ZBrush to make a simple reference tool matching what I need to paint. In the end, I render a few different angles of the mesh I make, then copy and paste one of those directly onto the greyscale sketch.

Artist PROFILE

Igor Kieryluk

COUNTRY: Poland



Igor is a freelance illustrator working for Wizards of the Coast, Fantasy Flight Games and DC Comics.

igorkieryluk.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Igor Kieryluk folder in Workshops.

I was introduced to Elesh during the final stages of illustrating the New Phyrexia set for Magic: The Gathering. As far as I know, the original visual concept was created by Richard Whitters, the lead concept designer for Magic.

Given that I'm working from a pre-made representation of the character for this image, I'll tread a thin line between established visual forms and my interpretation of the basic rules of her faction. Porcelain-like material covering raw tissue, mechanical parts melding with organic elements and spindly, frail silhouettes shape my framework on this piece. On top of that, both the style guide and Elesh's brief make it clear I should avoid making the final illustration overly dark and brooding. Magic is defined by its mechanical colour philosophy and an illustration on a white card shouldn't be mistaken for something that could end up on a black or red one.

As I try to answer those requirements, I imagine a benevolent priest, blessing the faithful masses as she gracefully descends the steps of her temple accompanied by serfs and lesser clergy. So I overlay the original concept's imagery on my vision. One light trick later, the piece arrives at its final destination.

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Flowing forms

I pay a lot of attention to the hands. I go with forms that I've established in previous pieces dealing with Elesh's faction, and elongate the last bone of each finger into a claw-like shape, maintaining the soft, flowing lines I've used elsewhere.



How I create... MY OWN VERSION OF ELESH



1 Early sketches

Normally, I draw a bunch of snapshots, ranging from stick figures to full-blown posed scenes with lighting marked out to animate the static concepts I'm given. Here, I know that both the overall composition and positioning of the main character should serve the final idea. Once I've visualised the scene, I make just a couple of test sketches to check the values.



2 Review the light

I know the light source will be more or less abstract, so the only thing I'm concerned with is whether the light and shadow values provide clear, readable visuals that accentuate detail well and don't show up in weird places.



3 Colour and refine

After I colourise the greyscale image and merge all the relevant layers, I tend to go over them again and redefine various portions of the painting with my favourite Chalk brush. I use the painting as a palette to help me maintain a constant colour scheme.

Off-screen light

I know that the light here will be off-screen, flooding the scene and operating with a lot of ambient occlusion to soften up the edges and shadows as much as possible. Once I know the general direction of illumination, all I have to watch out for is keeping the background and foreground uniformly saturated.



ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SOFT ROUND 100 1



I use this brush when tackling the soft fabric of the character's cloak.

K_CHALKY



This brush is ideal for painting the bone-like structure of the figure.

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Photoshop

DESIGN A SPACE OPERA PRINCESS



A bold personality and readable silhouette help to make a character memorable. **Kevin Chen** walks you through the design process

Artist PROFILE

Kevin Chen
COUNTRY: US



A freelance concept artist, and founder and director of Concept Design Academy, Kevin's recent projects include character and costume designs for Bulletstorm.
catapusdesign.blogspot.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Kevin Chen folder in Workshops.

A good character design creates an iconic image that helps to establish a project's identity, its storytelling and the clarity needed for a smooth production. In this tutorial, I'll share some of the design tips and working processes I've learned while designing characters for video games.

Designing for games is different to designing for film or animation. The characters have to play a double role – they're storytelling archetypes as well as being great interactive avatars that enable the player to immerse themselves in and interact with the game world.

Illustrating a character for CG production is also slightly different to creating a print illustration. Our goal is to communicate the design clearly to the modeller in terms of form and texture as quickly as possible. We often use many photos to speed up the process and the rendering isn't as important because it's the final game model that counts. As character designers, we're the least expensive way to explore many ideas early on and to establish interesting designs that will help inspire the team to be excited about the new project.

My demo for this workshop illustrates how I'd take a rough design idea from line to colour finish for early pre-production pitches. Let's get started!

1 Do some research

Before starting the drawing, I like to spend some time thinking about and researching different ways I can approach the character. Other than knowing that she's a princess for a sci-fi project, I'm asking myself questions such as: Who is she? Where does she come from? What job does she do? Why is she in the story? When does the tale take place? Asking myself these questions helps me get to know the character better so that I can come up with some interesting answers to design around.



2 Pose the character

I pose a generic mannequin that's both accurate in its proportions and has the right gesture to help convey her personality and attitude. In this case, I want the princess to be proud, so I give her an arching spine and shoulders to push her chest out and show her confidence. When posing for a game character, it's a good idea to keep the limbs away from the body so that there's a clear view of the design. Classic three-quarter front and back views of a character are ideal for this purpose because they enable the modeller to see the most information.

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3 Define the face and body

Personality is paramount when creating a character design; it motivates everything and is what will leave a lasting impression on the viewer. I want to define my character with a distinctive personality, facial structure and body build. I'm focusing on making the face interesting just through the larger skull structure. I want to give her a European, aristocratic kind of face along with a fencer's body type.



5 Flesh out the design

At this point, I find that the mechanical left arm needs to be clarified, so I'm sketching some ideas on the right to help resolve the design. The overall costume is looking a bit busy, so I'm doing a small thumbnail sketch on the left to help me see the big picture more clearly. (I'm also thinking about how her blade can break into a whip.) I'll usually take at least three design options to this level for the art director to pick from before I move on to the colour phase with the chosen design.



Shortcuts

Free transform

Ctrl+T (PC)

Cmd+T (Mac)

Right-click the top of the selection to add Warp and stretch an image over a surface.

PRO SECRETS

Amplify the animation

Often in a platform game, you'll see a character's full body as it moves quickly around the screen. To help the animation read better, a common trick is to have the important animation areas amplified in shape, value or silhouette. This way, it will echo the animation read whenever the character moves, so the viewer can track the movement easily. A good example of this is Shinobi's scarf in the eponymous series, which enables the player to follow his whereabouts.



6 Mask the character

To help shorten the clean-up time, I paint a selection mask so I can separate the character from the background easily. I like doing this phase because it helps me check to see how well the silhouette of the character is working without the internal details. You can do this same process with the Lasso tool, but I prefer using the brush because it gives me more control.



4 Compose the costume

When designing the costume, it's important to think of both front and back views – especially for a third-person platform title or first-person shooter, where the character is seen from the back for 80 per cent of the game. For clear composition, vary the costume into small, medium and large shapes. This will create a nice stage for the areas of detail to become the focus. The face, hands and upper back of a major game character are important areas for player identity, animation and user interface design reasons, so you need to take this into account.

7 Ambient lights

Using the mask as a selection, I start to add a gradation to the background from dark to light. To help the character pop, I use a reverse gradation on her. To keep the drawing showing through the gradation, I apply the layers with either Soft Light or Overlay.

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8 Design the local value pattern

Before I add any fancy lighting, I want to paint the character as if she's in ambient light. This helps to guarantee that she'll look good in both shadow and a well-lit scene. When designing the local values, I use three values in small, medium and large proportions for clear staging.



9 Test the colours

I try to use colour palettes that will evoke an emotion. I'm using the royal flag colours as a base for the design to reflect her personality and heritage. It's crucial to organise or desaturate your colour base to a warm or cool tone so you can stage up an accent colour. As a general rule, keep colours simple if you have a sculptural form and complex if your forms are flat.



10 Begin to create the flesh tone

I start to rough out the flesh tone to help me key the rest of the colour saturations around it. Skin is an interesting material because it's a neutral warm grey sheet that will take on any colour you shine on it. It's also a transparent material – the light can pass through the fleshy areas, giving it a rich red tone in the shadows. The key to painting a good skin tone is to use the red tones only in the fleshy areas.

11 Render the major forms

To help me save time on rendering, I'm painting a cylinder and ball to superimpose on top of the major body forms using Soft Light or Overlay. You can see them to the left and right of the character in this image. Using this technique, I can very quickly establish the big masses with light and shadow. In work situations where I need to paint more quickly and time is of the essence, I'll use photographs at this stage of the process. The photographs provide me with many subtle details and colour variations that are time-consuming to replicate by hand-painting.





Shortcuts
Curves
Ctrl+M (PC)
Cmd+M (Mac)
Quickly vary saturations and add neutral grey and saturated shadows to a flesh tone.

12 Establish the materials

To start the material rendering, I like to first establish the softest and hardest materials. In this case, it's the skin and the metallic armour. For skin, I use the Curve tool to help control the saturation of the shadows and introduce the subtle grey into the skin tone. For the metallic parts, I use the Lasso tool to give a clean edge and the Colour Dodge layer to give a nice saturation while I paint the reflective lights on the metallic surface.

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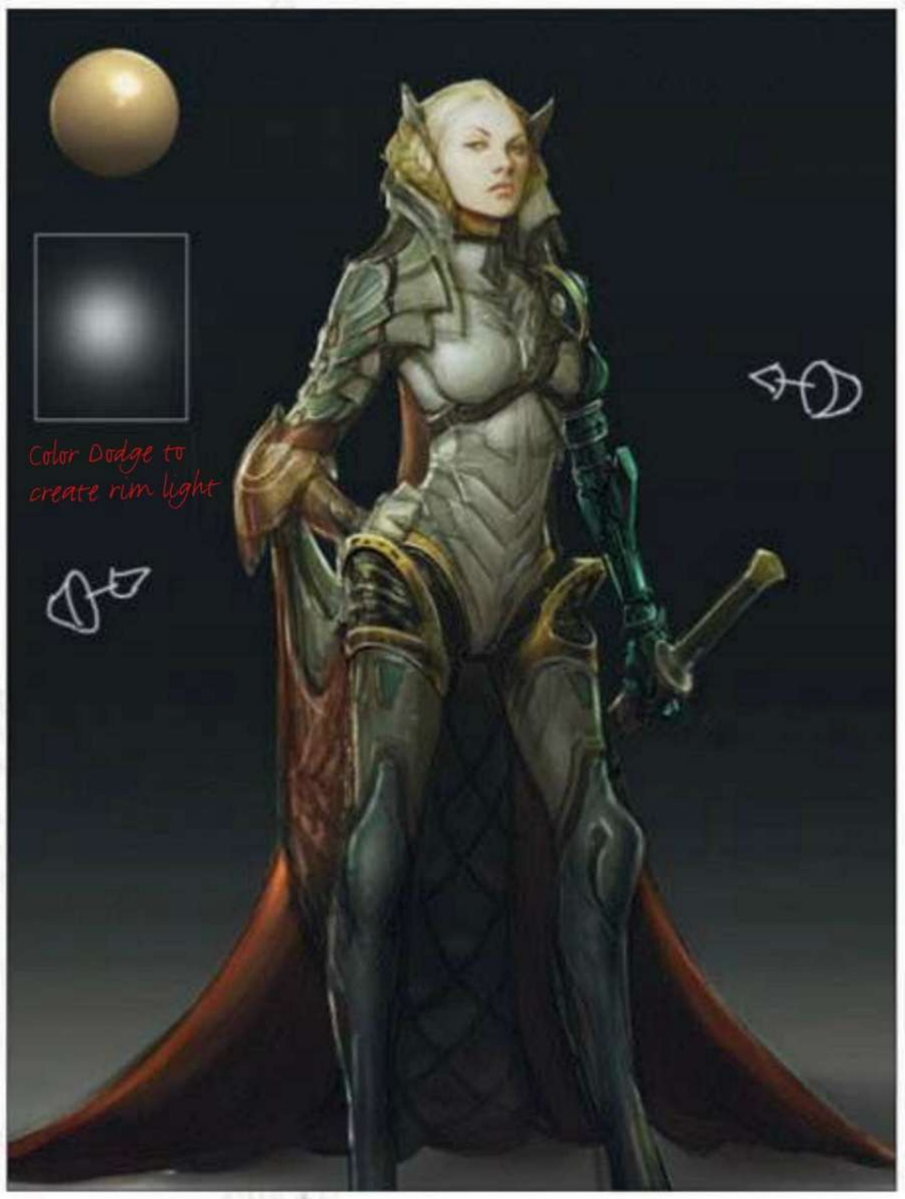
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PRO SECRETS

Design for gameplay

In game production, the gameplay experience is the core that all designs need to follow. When creating enemies, it's important to give them a clear shape hierarchy so you understand who's the boss and who are the grunts. You need to design with a clear sense of direction, so the players know which is the danger side and where to find the blind spot. When designing main characters, the back and weapon are important because they often serve as a display for player health and weapon quantity.





13 Three layers, three materials

Once the extremes are established, I focus on the different materials in between. For a believable costume design, there are always at least three layers of clothing and three types of material present. When I have a hard time indicating a material, I often paint it separately as a ball to figure out its colours and reflective quality. Once I solve the rendering problem, I can then colour pick and apply it to my character.

14 Colour gradations

To help unify the colours further and give a better sense of lighting, I often apply another gradation layer over the character and background. In this case, I introduce a warm to cool gradation to mimic the natural fall-off that occurs in a lighting situation. For lighting up a subtle gradation, Soft Light is my favourite tool to use because it has a very gentle effect on the colour and value.



15 Adding drama

To give the character a dramatic feel and make her pop out from the background, I apply a kicker light behind her to give a nice rim light and show off her silhouette. To paint the rim light, I use the Paint Bucket to create a black layer and assign it a Color Dodge layer property. When I paint a warm white on top of that Color Dodge layer, it gives a nice glow effect that mimics the saturation that happens when strong light hits an object.



16 Final adjustments

After a few more tweaks, the design is ready. Often it takes several revisions to get a main character approved for 3D modelling. Once approved, it's standard to create a material call-out sheet for the modeller to reference and a turn-around drawing to finish the design package.

ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: ELLIPSE BRUSH



The ellipse brush, set to a spacing of 1,000 per cent, is a simple but useful tool. I use it often to help me clean up ellipses and cylinders on mechanical objects.

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Photoshop & SketchUp

SET THE SCENE FOR A VIDEO GAME

Turn a street into a compelling game location by following the expert advice of **Robh Ruppel**, as he explains how to generate rich, detailed scenery

Artist PROFILE

Robh Ruppel
COUNTRY: US



Robh designs for films, video games, theme parks and print campaigns. His clients include Naughty Dog.
www.robhruppel.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Robh Ruppel folder in Workshops.

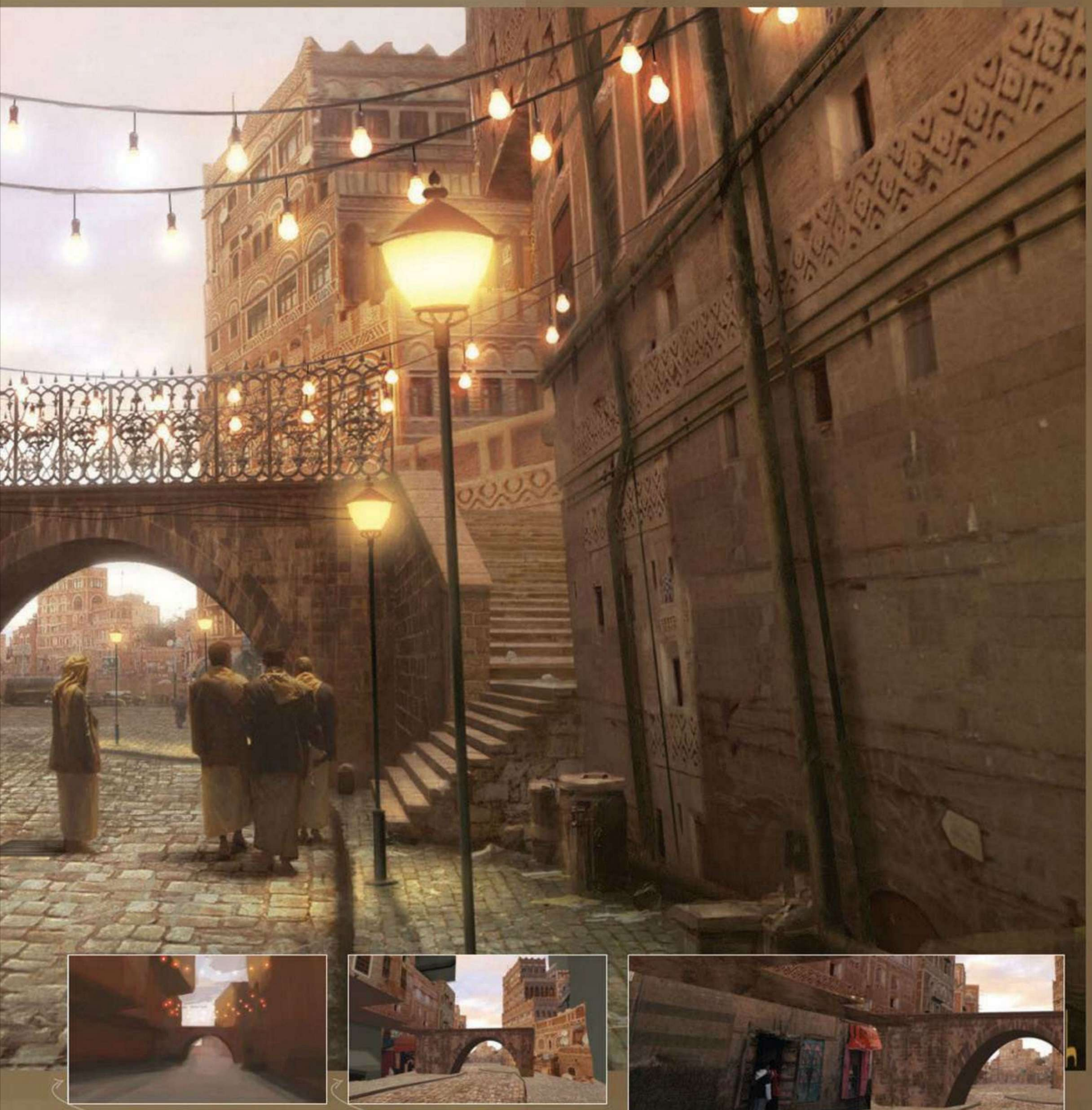
It's a common misconception that concept work is all about blue-sky problem solving – meaning that anything goes. This couldn't be further from reality, because most design work has some kind of restriction involved.

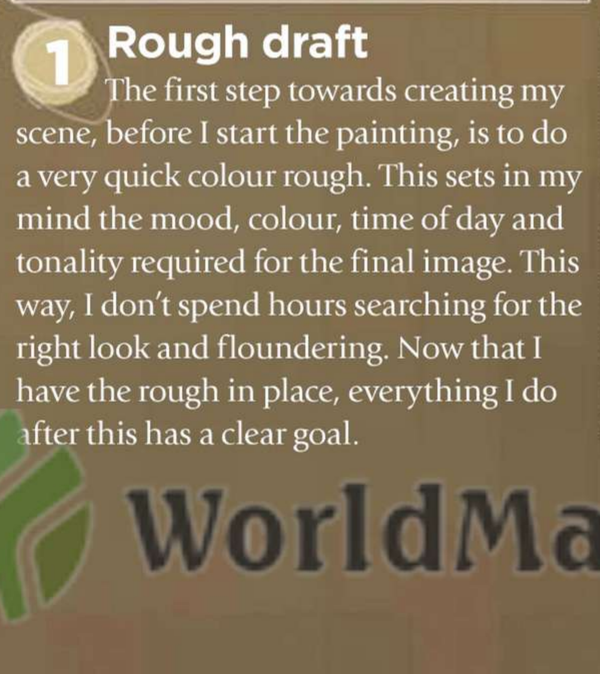
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception is a realistic game in that most of the locations are based on real places. These are heavily researched before we begin to work out the details. In this section, which is based on Yemen, the player races across the bridge but shouldn't be able to leap down. The designer added long bars as an indicator that gameplay needed to be blocked here, but none of the details were worked out – that's our job as artists. The designers fine-tune the playing experience and we figure out how to make it look intriguing. This simple model is called a blockmesh and a lot of what we do involves making these look alive, purposeful and believable.

In this tutorial, I'll show you how to set the scene for a video game. I start by creating a rough layout, then lay in some textures and add background detail, before refining the image with lights and set dressing. Along the way, you'll also see how I give life to a scene through the extra little details, making the location look more vibrant and inhabited.

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1 Rough draft

The first step towards creating my scene, before I start the painting, is to do a very quick colour rough. This sets in my mind the mood, colour, time of day and tonality required for the final image. This way, I don't spend hours searching for the right look and floundering. Now that I have the rough in place, everything I do after this has a clear goal.

2 Lay in textures

I start laying in textures, but need to modify them a lot. Details have to be added, taken out and repainted. Working flat helps to speed up that part, and then they're 'tipped in' using a range of transform tools – mostly Free Transform, Perspective and Warp. No photo texture is ever spot-on, and once they're tipped in the depth needs to be readjusted.

3 More texturing

Here you can see my first pass on that texture on the underside of the left-hand buildings. I also add more to the right side of the buildings. There's no easy way to do this other than painstakingly adding and adjusting until you achieve the look you're after. Have patience, though, because your hard work will pay off.

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4 Add the fence

This is my solution for the wrought iron fence. It's ornate but pointy to discourage the player from scaling it. I start with a flat design that, once the section is set, I duplicate and add to until I have a full-length structure. Then I Free Transform it to fit the perspective of the scene. You can also see the beginning of the stairs on the right. The tonality is critical: if they feel real in this version, the details will just enhance them later.

5 The occlusion pass

Next, I work on some more details, adding pipes, beams and supports to the buildings. Most of these are stroked paths to which I add a little light and shadow. Then it's time for the occlusion pass. Occlusion is the subtle darkening that happens when surfaces meet and the light rays bounce less and less between them. I do some simple airbrushing on a separate layer, set to Multiply.

PRO SECRETS

Work with your grids

Always check your perspective against the grids you make. Solidity and believability come from consistency and that's based on the forms working with your established vanishing points. Remember that this affects everything from the thickness of a wall to its texture.



Shortcuts

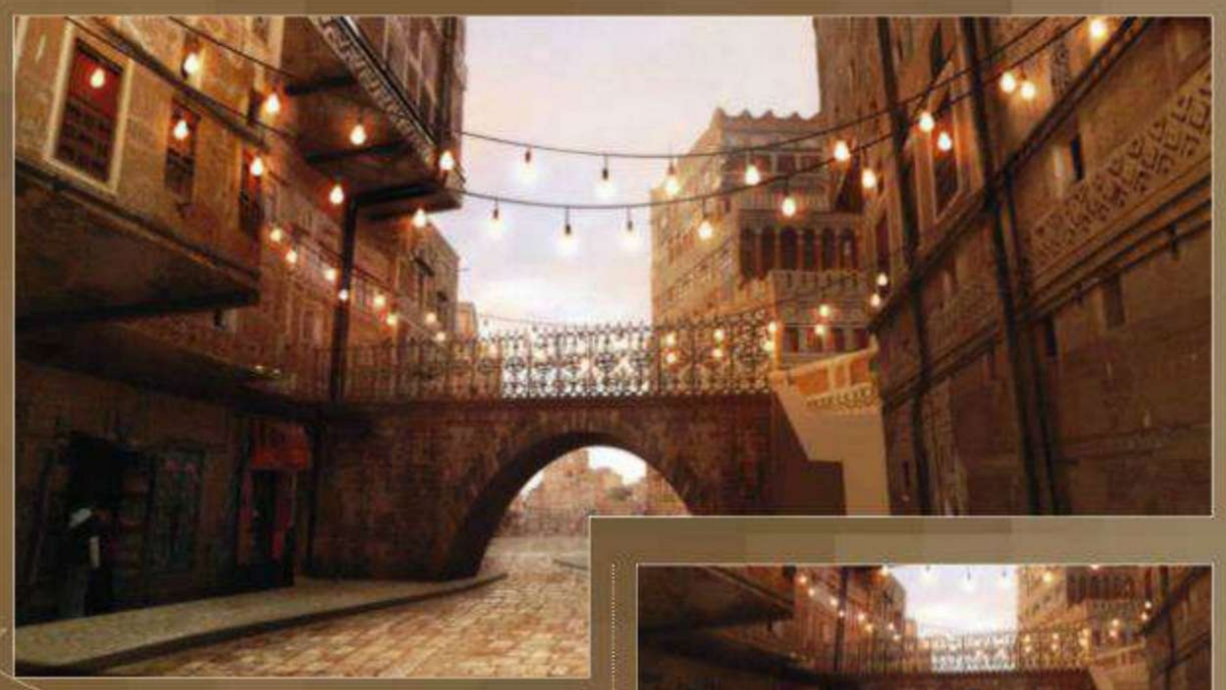
Distort mode

Ctrl+T, Ctrl (PC)
Cmd+T, Cmd (Mac)

Bring up the Transform tool, transform, then hold down Ctrl/Cmd to flip to Distort mode.

6 Hanging lights

Once that's done, I can begin adding the hanging lights, which will be strung in a few rows between the buildings on the left and right of the image. I'll be using lots of them, so this is not the time to make things complicated for myself: the wire is a stroked path and I keep things simple by making one bulb and duplicating it. I take some time placing them correctly in the scene. I'm still thinking about other aspects of the composition as a whole at this stage, and I add the shadow in the foreground where the car will go later on.

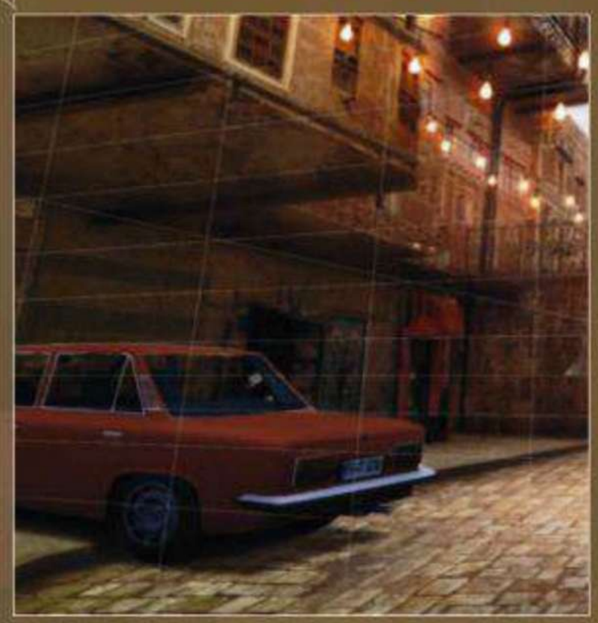


7 Let there be light

Now I can turn on the sets of hanging lights that I added in the previous step. A radial gradient set to Color Dodge gives them a nice glow and adds to the atmosphere of the scene. Light travels, so once they're lit, I need to add the effect on the pavement below. This is an airbrushed layer set to Screen.

8 Create the car

I want an older European model of car, so I use Google's library and make a simple render inside SketchUp for perspective. All the reflections and details will be painted in later. Adding the stairs needs precision and care, so drawing and perspective are the next things I need to concentrate on. I work out all the stairs' thicknesses in perspective by using paths to accurately lay them out.





9 Flatten the image

I add more details on the stairs and at this point the file is over 1GB in size. I feel good about where it's at, so I flatten and rename it so I can continue to add more levels. One disadvantage to painting everything flat is that when you tip it in perspective the depth gets thrown way off. I go back in and add thickness to the cobblestones and pavement trim. These extra steps sell the reality of the image.

10 Set dressing

So far it's just a lot of flat planes and textures – it needs life! My typical procedure is to work in flat shapes first,



and then add modelling, texture and so on. I block in bins, boxes and the kinds of junk you might find in a real location.

11 More details

Keeping the solidity of the simple geometric shapes in mind, I add lighting and detail to the objects on the pavement.

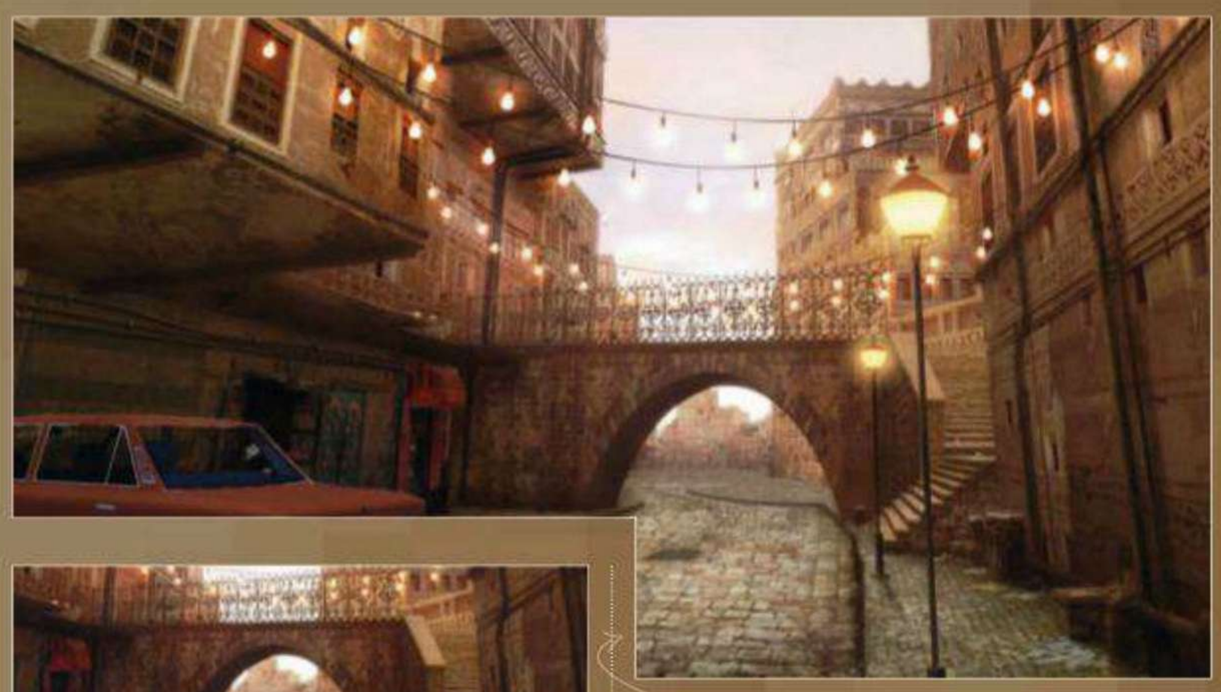


This is all very loosely done and indicative, but the illusion makes it seem like there's more going on than there really is.



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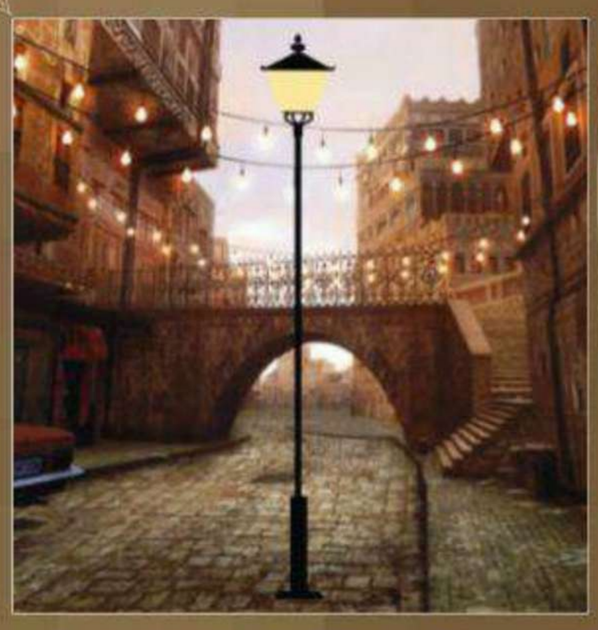


12 Wear and tear

I continue to add set dressing, which helps to make the environment look inhabited – and therefore more realistic. You can see bits of paper and other rubbish on the pavement, and I also work on some subtle wear and tear on the road. This is all hand painted.

13 The streetlights

Now I add the streetlights, using the same workflow as before. I design the light flat, work out the basic colour value and then tip it in perspective and add modelling, lighting, and so on. There's more set dressing, too – some electrical conduits along the shops on the left. I use the same procedure here as for the pipes.





14 Add lighting effects

Here are the streetlights blended into the scene with some lighting effects and subtle modelling added. I take particular care to get the perspective right, and to consider the viewer's eye as I do so. I use a little Transform Warp to get the ellipse of the lamp to seem as though it's above our eye level.

15 Work on the car

It's time to make that car sit in the scene. First, I add the reflections – having drawn a lot of cars at Art Center College of Design, this is pretty easy to fake. I also darken it down the sides and add the reflection of the light sources. Then I make a subtle perspective shift based on my grids to finally tweak the object into the perspective of the scene.



16 Distant detailing

I correct the perspective on the red awning and begin to add distant details such as adverts, posters, trucks, cars and pedestrians, all of which flesh out the scene. None of these can be faked or done haphazardly because that will blow the illusion. This is where a lot of artists don't follow through and the work ends up looking ill-conceived or unfinished. I add faraway lights, making sure they recede in the distance and maintain the same height as the foreground ones.



17 Hand painting

It's time to add the group of people standing in the street and the effect of the lamps on the ground. Lots of hand painting marries these folks into the scene. It's worth remembering, too, that no reference is ever perfect – the better artist sweats these details.

18 Give it character

Next, I add another character in the foreground. I keep all the people looking into the picture – they're for scale and ambiance, and this keeps the viewer from focusing on their personalities. This is primarily an environment study. Also, there's a subtle three-point perspective going on here that I have to conform to. The broad strokes sell it and the details support it. You need both!





Shortcuts

Find a layer

V, Ctrl-click (PC)

V, Cmd-click (Mac)

In Move mode (V), Ctrl/Cmd-click on something to instantly find its layer.

19 The final image

When I've made the finishing touches to the environment and the foreground character, my image is complete. Here's the final piece with all of my grids turned on, so you can see how they relate to the composition. Solidity and believability are grounded in consistency. What does that mean? Make sure your perspective is correct.

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Photoshop

PAINT DYNAMIC CONCEPT ART

Daryl Mandryk shows you how to get imaginations fired up as you take a game scene idea from sketch to completion

Artist PROFILE

Daryl Mandryk
COUNTRY: Canada



Daryl's been working in the entertainment industry for over 11 years, first as a 3D modeller and texture artist, then as a concept artist. His clients include EA.
mandrykart.com

DVD Assets



The files you need are on your DVD in the Daryl Mandryk folder in Workshops.

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Working in the games industry, developing concept art, part of my job is to visualise moments in a game. These creations often help to inspire the team, or generate discussion within it. Sometimes these ideas will be provided by others and sometimes you'll be asked to come up with things on your own.

In this workshop, I'll develop a quick doodle from scratch, all the way up to a finished product ready for presentation to a team or client. I'll take you through the steps I use initially to flesh out an idea. As I go, I'll talk about my thought process regarding colour, composition and idea development. You'll also see how I create the lighting for my scene, learn a simple way to help give your image a photographic feel and find out why more detail isn't always better.

You don't need to be an expert in Photoshop to follow this workshop – in fact, many of the concepts explored here will transfer over to any program you happen to work in. So open up your favourite software and let's begin…

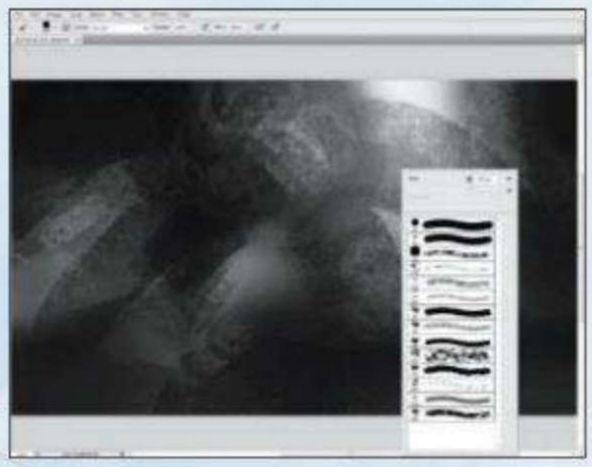
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PRO SECRETS

Maintain momentum

Paint as much as you can in one sitting. If you constantly start and stop a painting, it'll take you a long time to finish it and you'll end up losing creative momentum. Take the time to really get absorbed by the painting process. This approach will also teach you to work more quickly and efficiently.



1 Make a quick start with abstract forms

For this image, I imagine a moment in my head. When I don't have a specific idea or brief that I'm working towards, I like to start very loosely, almost painting in an abstract manner. I try to get something on the canvas quickly, just using a few different texture brushes, exploring and trying to see something emerge from the fog. When I think I find something in the shapes, I know I'm ready to move on to the next stage. If nothing appears then I'll just keep exploring in this way until something does. It's okay to take your time here. Eventually an idea will spark – but sometimes it just takes a while.

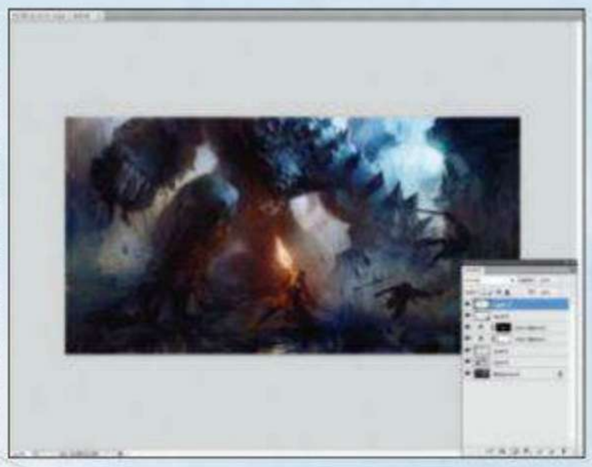
2 Composition and idea development

I start to see an image in my head of what this could be, so now I choose a pretty standard chalky brush (find it on the DVD) and start refining a few areas. I picture an angry monster laying waste to an unfortunate adventuring party. This could be a boss encounter that the party is a bit too low level to take on. This early on, the details aren't important – I'm just trying to make sure the big shapes and composition feel correct and get a sense of movement and action. There will be plenty of time to detail and render later on, but for now I just keep things sketchy and messy. I'm most interested in creating a strong base to work from.



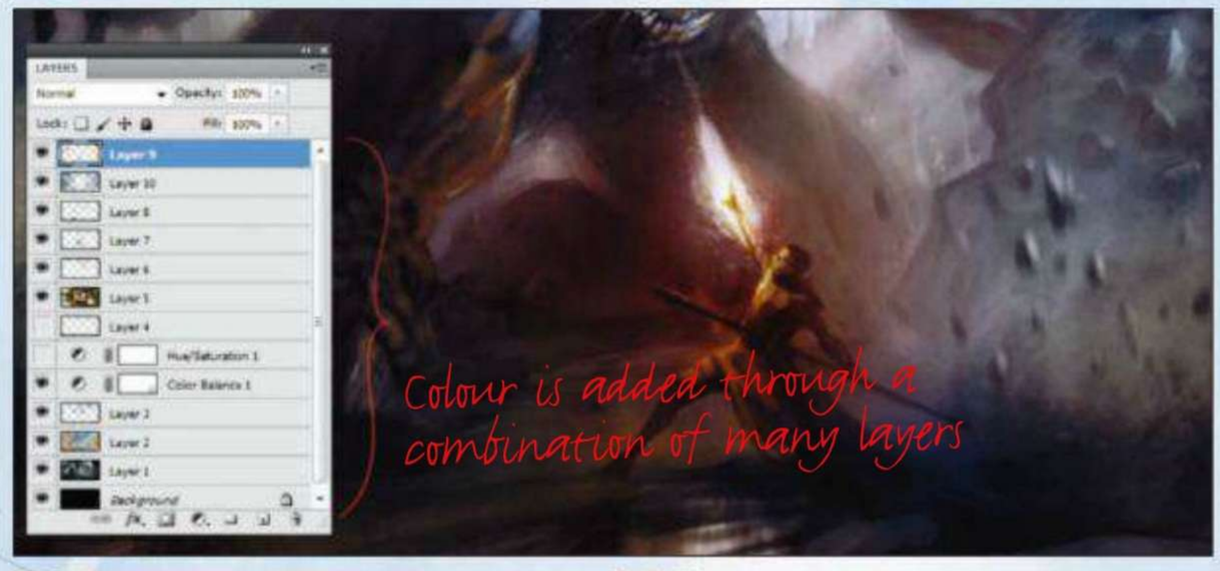
3 The finished sketch

I'm happy with the composition and don't have to make any drastic changes, so I continue to flush out the sketch and quickly paint in a face for the monster. This might change later on, but because it's a focal point of the image it's important to get something in there quickly to set the mood. I'm keeping the image greyscale for now. Taking colour out of the process early on can simplify things and help you concentrate on just building a good composition.



5 Try to work the whole painting

I tend to zoom out and work the whole image at once, picking areas that need love and tightening them up a little before bouncing around somewhere else. This keeps me from getting too obsessed with a certain area and lets me see the image as a whole. I add another figure being smashed by the giant fist. I really want to sell the impact and capture the action. I make a mental note to add more dust and debris at a later stage.



4 First colour washes

Digital tools make adding colour easy. Here, I use a combination of several Colour and Overlay layers to quickly add life to the painting and establish a basic palette. It isn't exactly what I want, but it's a good base to work from. Colour can be very tricky and I find it evolves as the painting progresses. I treat colour the same as any other part of the painting.

6 Use dramatic lighting

I try to keep my lighting dramatic and interesting. This usually means strong lights that are at a pleasing angle to the subjects, which give good cast shadows. I don't feel it's necessary to light the entire scene – instead, I'll have certain areas fade out into darkness or fog. I try to use lighting as a tool to guide the viewer's eye and highlight what I want them to look at. Also, lighting is the best tool you have to describe form, so if something is feeling flat just cast a bit of light on it to help it pop off the page.





ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: DUST BRUSH



This is a versatile brush that can be used for many different effects. For this image, I used it to create the dust clouds, as well as some atmospheric effects.

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Shortcuts

Inverse selection

Ctrl+Shift+I (PC)

Cmd+Shift+I (Mac)

Paint within and around a selection quickly.



7 Check the composition

I quickly flip the whole painting (Image>Edit>Flip Horizontal) to see if it works in reverse. If the composition is strong, it should work mirrored or upside down. I usually flip the canvas many times as I work, to give myself a fresh perspective on things and check for errors. I tend to wait until the very end of a painting to make a final decision on whether to keep it as is, or mirror it. There are really no rules here, and I just pick what seems the most natural to me.



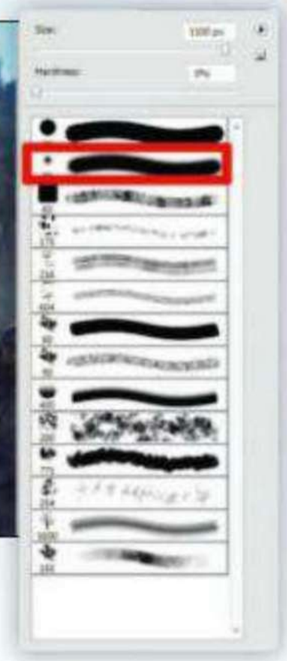
8 Push the light

I make a new Curves Adjustment Layer and brighten everything up a bit. Then I fill the box beside the layer (the layer mask) with black to hide the layer's contents. With a soft airbrush selected, I can go back in and start to paint white in the mask channel to reveal the brightened layer. This is a good technique to brighten certain areas of your painting in a non-destructive fashion. It's more of an image-editing technique than a painterly approach, but I believe in using whatever tool gets the result you want. Try it out.

9 Add atmosphere

I want to create a bit of distance and scale, so I pick a big blobby airbrush and start lightly painting in some foggy atmosphere here and there. I do this on a new layer so I can easily dial it back if I overdo it. This also functions as a form of contrast control – adding a layer of fog brings the values of the paint below it closer together, reducing contrast and pushing it backwards in space. Using this technique, I can erase parts of the image that I want to jump forward, such as the monster's knee.





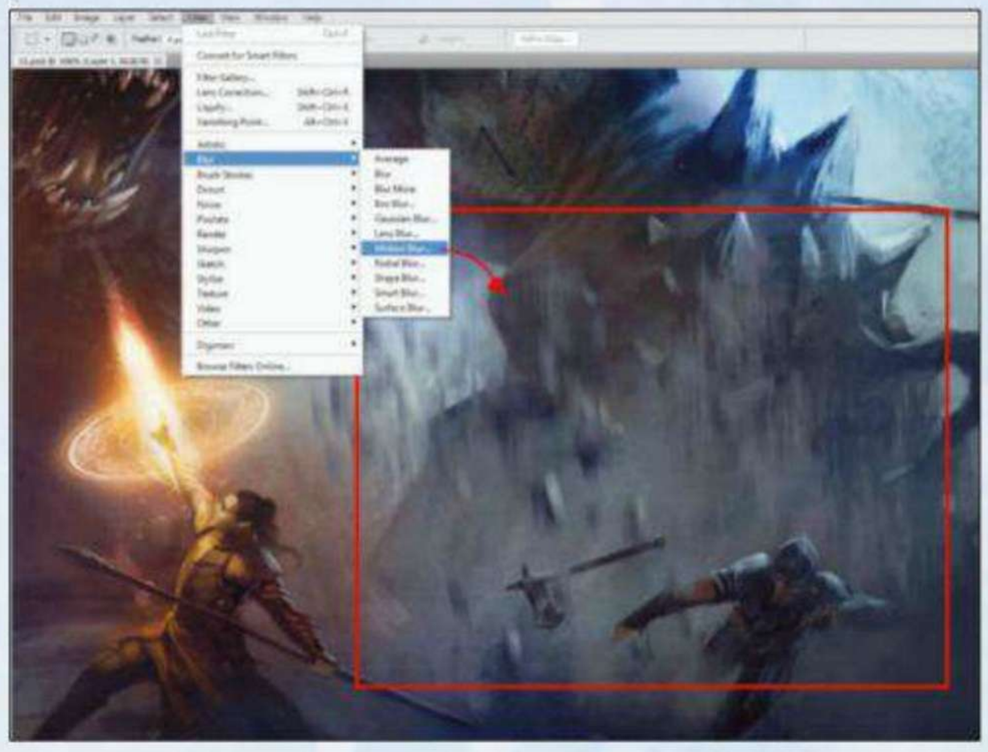


10 Spell special effects

I mock up some special effects for the hero's magic blast. I draw a pattern in flat, 2D space, and use the Free Transform tool (Ctrl+T) to position it where I need to. I mess around with some layer FX and overlay layers to give it a magical glow.

11 Add debris

I try to imagine the forces of cause and effect in the image. I want the viewer to feel the force of the impact, so I paint in some blocky shapes and then add a motion blur (Filter>Blur>Motion Blur) to give the impression they're being sprayed upward. Little touches such as this can really help to give your images a photographic feel.



PRO SECRETS

Actions are your friend

Use custom actions to automate time-intensive tasks. For example, if you have a set of brushes you like to use for specific tasks, make an action that loads them with one keystroke. Another good example is making an action to flip the canvas horizontally, which I do all the time. The seconds you save add up when you find yourself doing the same thing a thousand times.

12 Perspective puddles

I use the Lasso tool to make some quick selections to paint within. These will be puddles of water on the ground. They serve a dual purpose: they help to give the ground more interest, and smaller puddles in the background work to push the space back, and help to sell the illusion of a 3D space.



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Shortcuts

Scroll through layers

Alt+[,] (PC & Mac)

I keep my layer tab on my secondary monitor, so I can quickly select various layers.



13 Use photos

Here and there I like to composite parts of photos into the image. These are either pictures I've taken myself, or parts of photos I've found online. They're a quick way to add detail in certain areas that would otherwise take too long to paint, and in production these little time-saving tricks are very important.

14 Put in dust and light

I add some more dust, filling the bottom left of the image, and start to play with the strong light coming from the side. I use an Overlay layer to show some of the light-bleeding effect. I try to imagine the light travelling through all the dust and debris that's being kicked up, and the way it would scatter in the scene. It's a tricky balance – the light should be diffuse enough to suggest atmosphere, but bright enough to suggest daylight.



15 Refine the image

I start to feel like everything is in place and working well together. Now much of the painting process turns to refining and improving my ideas. I start to add some details to the elf's armour and begin to think about how to refine the design. It's time to tackle the micro-issues in the painting – but I'm constantly zooming out and checking to make sure everything still holds together.





16 Don't overdo it

While detailing an image I constantly remind myself not to overdo it. This figure is in motion and although he's close to the camera, how much detail would your eye really pick up? If I were to go crazy and detail out every last bit of armour, the result would be stiff and unappealing. Sometimes you just need to get across the impression of something and the viewer's mind will do the rest.



17 The home stretch

One way I know my painting is nearly done is that the law of diminishing returns starts to kick in. Brushstrokes are having less and less impact, so eventually it just feels like I'm overworking things if I continue. Now is a good time to put the painting aside for a day or two, and look at it later on with fresh eyes. Odds are I'll see something I want to change.

18 Fresh perspective

A day later, I make some final adjustments to the focal points of the image – the monster's face and the elf wizard. I don't necessarily add more detail; instead, I want to concentrate on making sure their designs read well and are strong contrasts to one another. When I'm satisfied with this last change, I call the painting done.



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Painter

WORK WITH SPECIAL EFFECTS

Use Painter 12's specialist functions to facilitate your workflow, produce intricate effects or simply have fun. **Simon Dominic** shows you how

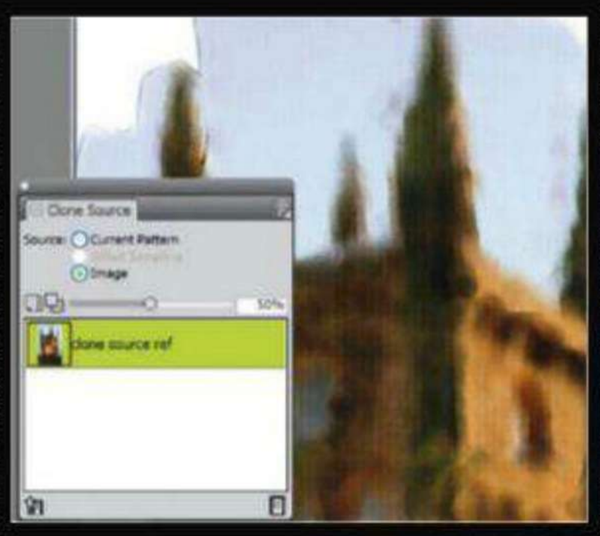
Painter 12 incorporates a number of functions that fall outside the range of core painting tools. In this article I'll examine two of the main ones you'll come across: Clone Source, which has been enhanced from Painter 11, and the new Kaleidoscope/Mirror mode.

Another new function that's worth mentioning is Smart Blur, which removes detail from an image while retaining the sharp outlines. Open a photograph, choose Effects>Smart Blur and alter the intensity using the slider.

One possible use of Smart Blur is as a way to produce an instant painting from your photographs. However, my preference is to apply it to reference photos so that when I look at them I'm not distracted by unnecessary detail.

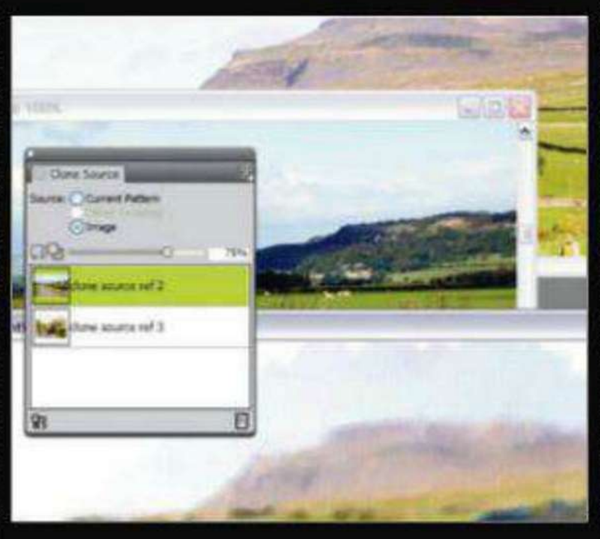
1 Discover the Clone Source tool

Clone Source helps you to duplicate an image with the paint effect of your choice. Load your source image and choose File>Clone to create a duplicate. Clear the duplicate image (Select>All, Edit>Clear, Select>None). Choose a brush, say Broad Water Brush from Digital Water Color, and paint onto the new canvas. Use the Toggle Tracing Paper icon and Opacity slider if you need to.



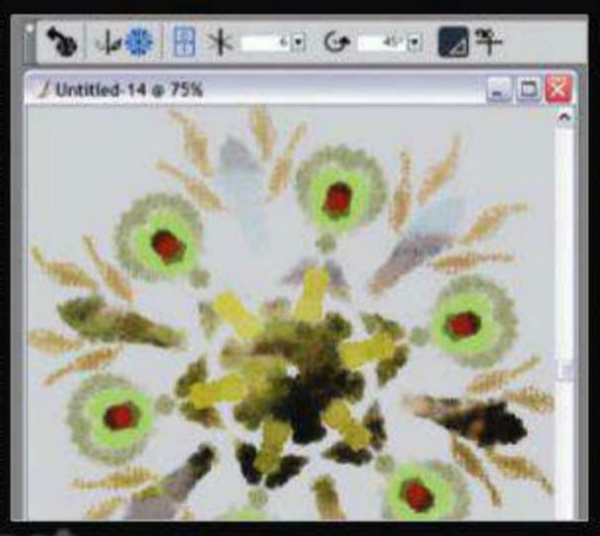
2 Clone from multiple sources

Click on the Open Source Image icon to the bottom left of the Clone Source panel and load one or more new images. By clicking on the image of your choice, you can clone from multiple images onto the same canvas. The tracing image changes to reflect the current source. To return to normal painting mode, simply click the Clone Color icon to the bottom right of the Color panel.



3 Kaleidoscope mode

This mode is handy for everything from painting patterns to sketching architecture. Create a new canvas and click the Kaleidoscope icon in the Toolbox (alternatively, click and hold the Mirror icon if it's not present). Adjust the Segment and Rotation sliders on the properties bar or drag a segment line for ad-hoc rotation. Drag the segment intersection to move the centre. You can even use it with Clone Source.



Artist PROFILE

Simon Dominic
COUNTRY: England



Simon is a self-taught freelance illustrator who specialises in fantasy, sci-fi and horror. He works primarily on game art, book covers, private commissions, cards and magazines.
painterly.co.uk

THE SPECIAL EFFECTS OPTIONS

A. Kaleidoscope/Mirror icon in the toolbox
Click and hold to display both options.

B. Mirror icon in pullout view
Displayed by holding down the icon.

C. Kaleidoscope icon in pullout view
Property bar layout for the Kaleidoscope tool. The Mirror layout is very similar, except that the Segment attribute is replaced by a Vertical/Horizontal Plane option.

D. Reset Kaleidoscope Mode
This defaults the current settings. Click Toggle Kaleidoscope Mode and reselect your brush to continue.

E. Mirror icon
In the Kaleidoscope property bar. This switches to Mirror mode.

F. Kaleidoscope icon
In the Kaleidoscope property bar. This switches to Kaleidoscope mode.

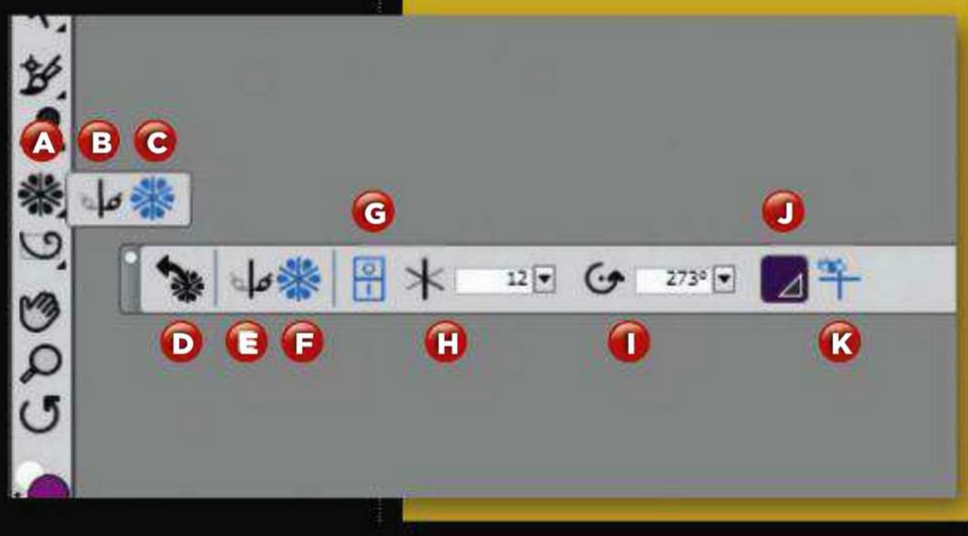
G. Toggle Kaleidoscope Mode
This returns you to normal painting mode.

H. Segment Number
Type a value or use the slider.

I. Rotation Angle
Type a value or use the slider.

J. Symmetry Plane Color
Set the colour of your guidelines.

K. Toggle Planes
Make the guidelines visible or invisible.



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Take to the skies with the art of Ryan Church!

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Concept artist Mike McCain shows how nature influences the look of his spaceships.

Pedal to the metal
Liviu Tudoran reveals the secrets behind a cutting-edge car design.

Lost in dead space
How to break the rules of composition to better your art, with Bradley Wright.

ISSUE 76 ON SALE *18 OCTOBER 2011*

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Artist insight

CREATE LIFELIKE CLOUDSCAPES

Maciej Kuciara shares his tips for filling your skies with beautiful, atmospheric clouds of all shapes and sizes

Artist PROFILE

Maciej Kuciara
COUNTRY: Poland



Maciej is a concept artist involved in the video game, film and TV industries. Having worked at Crytek on the Crysis series, he now works for Naughty Dog in California.
maciejkuciara.com

DVD Assets

Maciej's collection of cloud imagery, along with six custom brushes, can be found on the disc in the Workshop section.

Over the years you'll rise to the challenge of many different types of concepts and paintings, and some of those will almost certainly require part of your canvas to be filled with sky and clouds. You might even find yourself painting dramatic-looking cumulus being split by trails of propeller fighters!

Whatever it's going to be, the sky will most likely be a major light source for your image. Unless you plan to paint perfect California weather, your skies will mostly be composed of clouds with atmospherics filling up the negative space. To help you to populate your skies with dramatic, fluffy and sweeping cloud formations, I've compiled these painting tips that will enable you to define interesting lighting and support the story behind your picture.

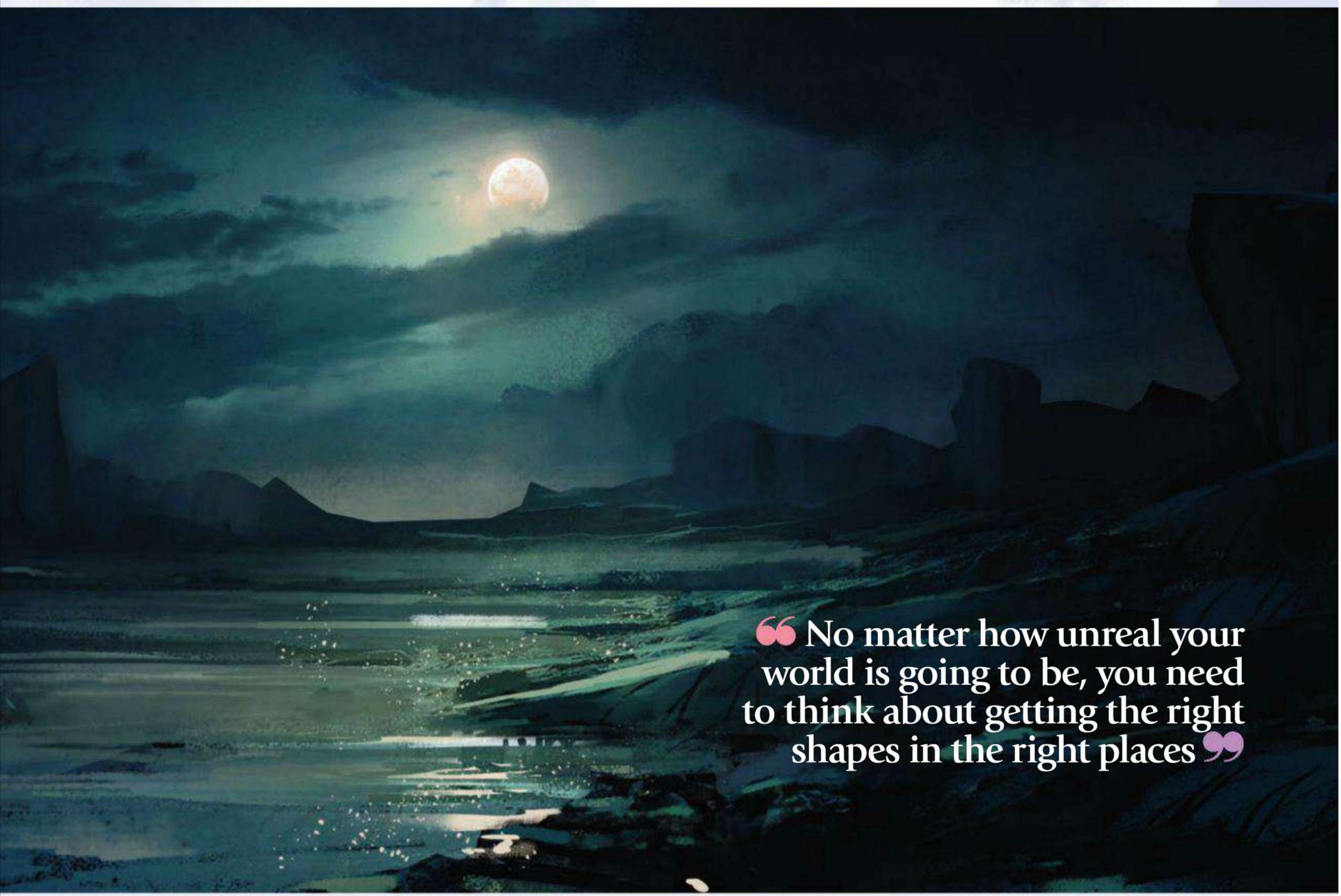


1 CONSIDER THE COMPOSITION

Think of clouds as an element of composition and make sure that they always support your foreground story. For example, you might want to use big, bright cumulus shapes placed behind the main character in your scene to contrast him with the background. This will draw him out from the scenery and make that part of your image more eye-catching. Clouds can take almost any shape known to man, which means they can be the perfect tool to frame your background elements and support the composition.

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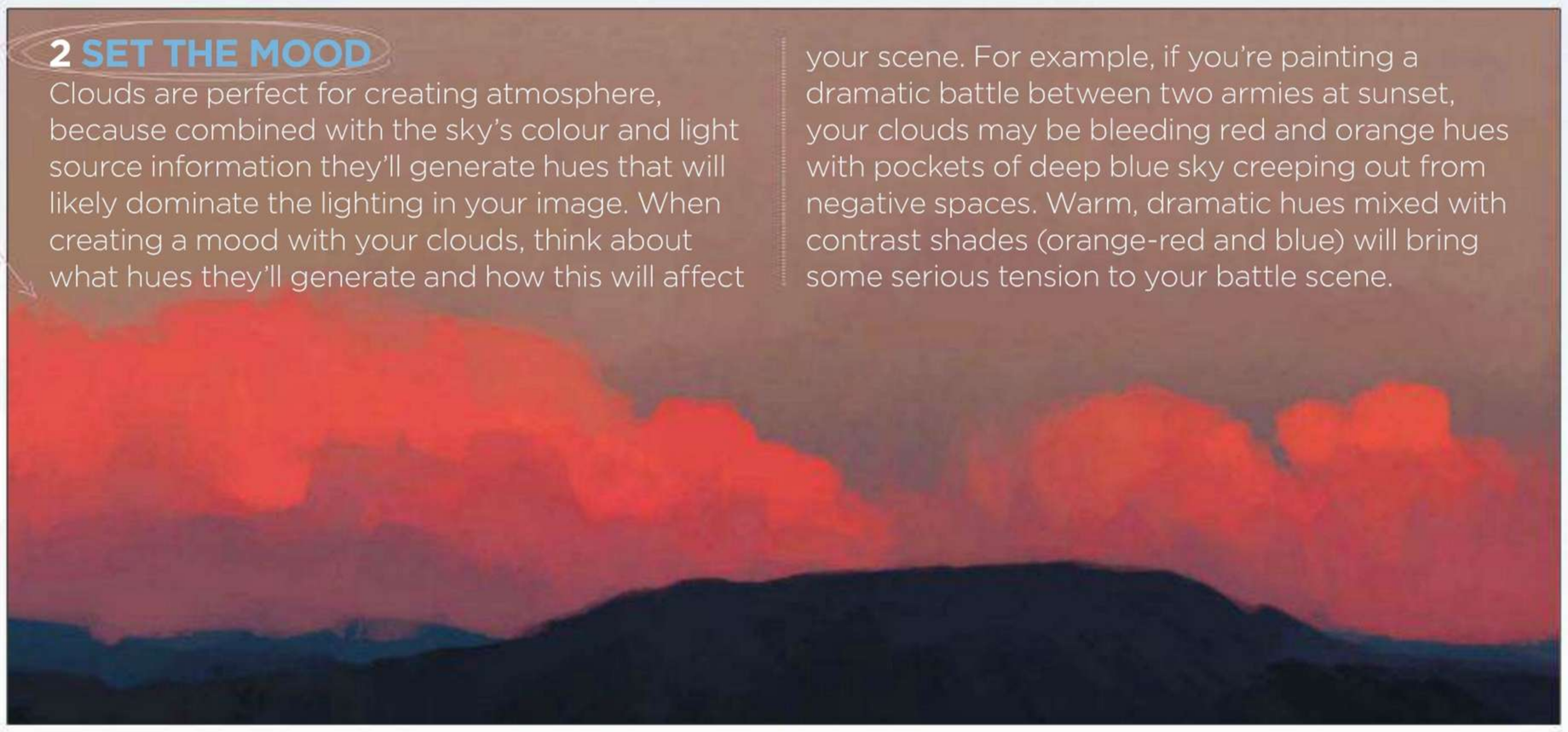
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> No matter how unreal your world is going to be, you need to think about getting the right shapes in the right places

2 SET THE MOOD

Clouds are perfect for creating atmosphere, because combined with the sky's colour and light source information they'll generate hues that will likely dominate the lighting in your image. When creating a mood with your clouds, think about what hues they'll generate and how this will affect your scene. For example, if you're painting a dramatic battle between two armies at sunset, your clouds may be bleeding red and orange hues with pockets of deep blue sky creeping out from negative spaces. Warm, dramatic hues mixed with contrast shades (orange-red and blue) will bring some serious tension to your battle scene.



PRO SECRETS

Brush tips

Try using Round Simple brushes to define the shapes of your clouds, then adjust the Softness slider to 0 per cent and paint in rough shadows and highlights. This will give you a nice base from which to work in some custom brush magic.

3 KNOW YOUR CLOUD TYPES

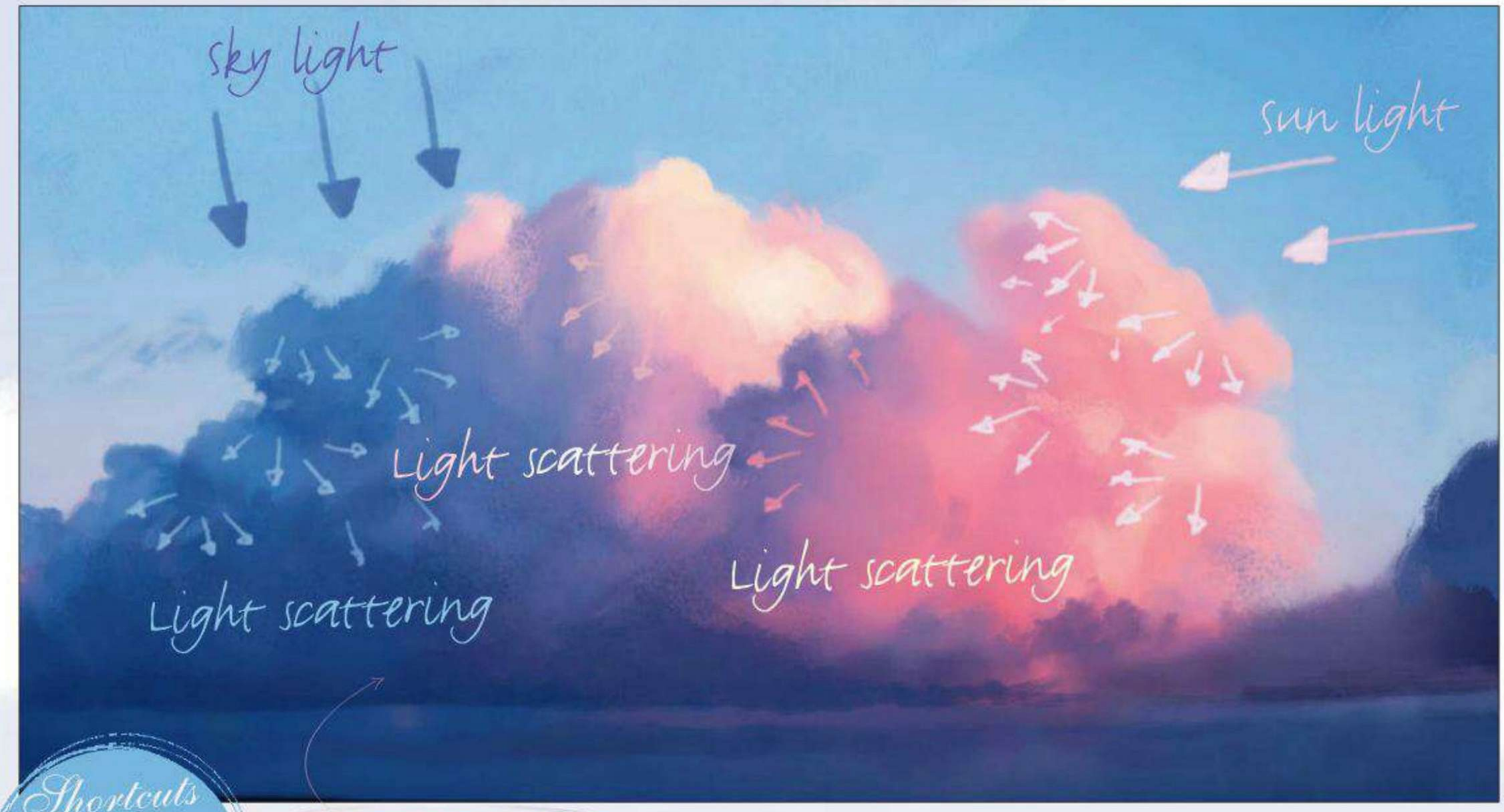
When you construct a painting, no matter how unreal your world is going to be, you always need to think about getting the right shapes in the right places. The same principle is true for clouds. If you paint cumulus clouds and then make them rain, your image will immediately feel odd. The human eye is used to the shapes of clouds and associates them with specific weather conditions. Your viewers will spot any discrepancies right away.

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4 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

Using the correct cloud types in your image may help to build the background for the tale that you want to tell. Whenever I paint concept art, I try to use everything on my canvas to support the story I'm creating. I do the same thing with clouds. In fairytale images, I might want to use fluffy cumulus clouds, for example. If my goal is to show upcoming danger, I'll try to go with cumulonimbus, while cold and scary moments can be achieved with stratus clouds, and so on. Let your choice of sky help to sell the story.



Shortcuts

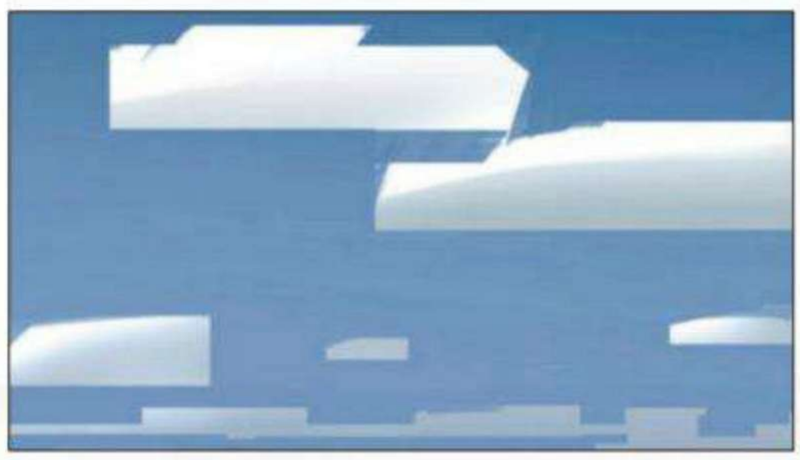
Flip Canvas Horizontal

Custom shortcut

Try key-binding Flip Canvas Horizontal and using it to expose any errors in composition.

5 SCATTER THE LIGHT

A cloud is nothing more than a mass of water droplets or ice crystals that are suspended in the air. As a result of their form and structure, clouds are quite translucent and irregularly shaped, and they're usually flat at the bottom. Keeping translucency in mind is important when you try to render clouds, because not only will the light affect the outer surfaces on the mass, but it will also scatter within, creating a different look to what you'd expect from other hard-surfaced materials. When you paint clouds, think of your primary light source and its direction. It's most likely to be light from the sun, moon or even the glow of a city that will light your clouds from below. There's always going to be soft ambient light coming from the sky. Both of those light sources are scattered within the cloud mass and need to be considered.









6 CHOOSE RELAXING OR DRAMATIC SHAPES

The shapes you use in your painting can quickly define how dynamic it's going to be. Usually, square and horizontal lines will create a static and pleasant image, while triangles and diagonal lines will increase the intensity. You can use shapes to your advantage and compose your clouds in the image's space to create the desired effect. Your puffy cumulus clouds can be relaxing for the viewer's eye when shaped in a way that supports horizontal lines and squares or, when caught at a dramatic camera angle, they can bring tension to an action sequence. Try out various shapes to see their different effects.

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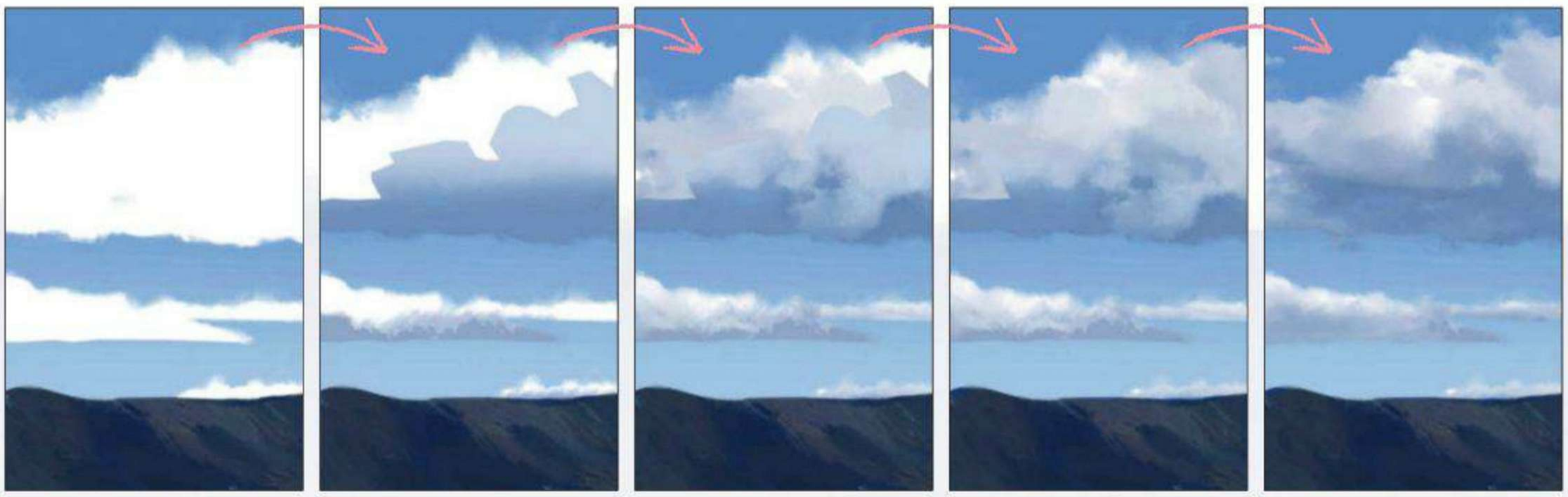
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7 USE PHOTOGRAPHS

There's nothing wrong with using photographs in your paintings as long as you employ them in the correct way. Perhaps the image you want to paint is supposed to be very realistic in its materials and details. In this case, spending endless hours on a pixel-perfect paint will probably be exhausting enough for you to take other, perhaps more important, parts of the image less seriously. If you have a camera, take it on your trips and collect materials. If you decide to use them in your images later on, be sure to go through the checklist below.



- Does the light direction in your photo match the one in your concept? It's never a good idea to use a photo if the lighting doesn't match. It will look wrong and probably hurt your image more than helping it.
- Is it the same time of day and is the lighting mood similar? If the difference in mood and colour is minimal, then you can always adjust the colours. Just remember that making day from night isn't going to work.
- Do the shapes captured in your photo match the ones in your sketch? If not, see if you can use your sketched-out shapes as a Mask layer for parts of the photos and perhaps you can collage the clouds out of them.



8 CHOOSE YOUR TOOLS

Once the initial shapes of my clouds are defined and the idea for the overall mood of the piece is in place, I usually work with the Selection and Gradient tools.

I keep thinking about the 3D form of the cloud mass, and with selections and gradients I sketch out the basic layout of the cloud's shadows. When this stage is complete, I can begin painting in the detail and adding definition.

I start with soft brushes to give the form a little extra highlight and shadow information. Then, with textured and scattered brushes (see 'Experiment with scatter', right), I add the definition and graininess to the image, making the clouds look more lifelike.

> "When I decide to paint clouds, I try to define a range of brushes that will help me to achieve my goals"

9 SWITCH BRUSHES

Try using more than one brush to paint your clouds. When I decide to paint clouds in my images, I try to define a range of brushes that will help me to achieve my goals. Scattered, grainy brushes give interesting texture to the clouds. With the Smudge tool, I make sure that transitions between values and hues are smooth within the shapes. I also like to keep sharp edges in some areas to give an illusion of 3D puffs sticking out from the main mass.

10 ADD ATMOSPHERE

Don't forget atmospheric effects when painting clouds. Haze, mist, rain or even sun rays can affect the way your clouds will be read – such effects will likely decrease the contrast, unify hues and values or even alter them in some cases. Atmospheric effects always add to the realism of my paintings and something as simple as haze can bring extra depth to the image.

PRO SECRETS

Experiment with scatter

Using custom brushes with scatter options can enable you to create interesting effects from the Smudge tool, which will give your images a painterly feel because of the way it blends your colours together. Play around with the different scattering and spacing options and find out which settings work best for your image.

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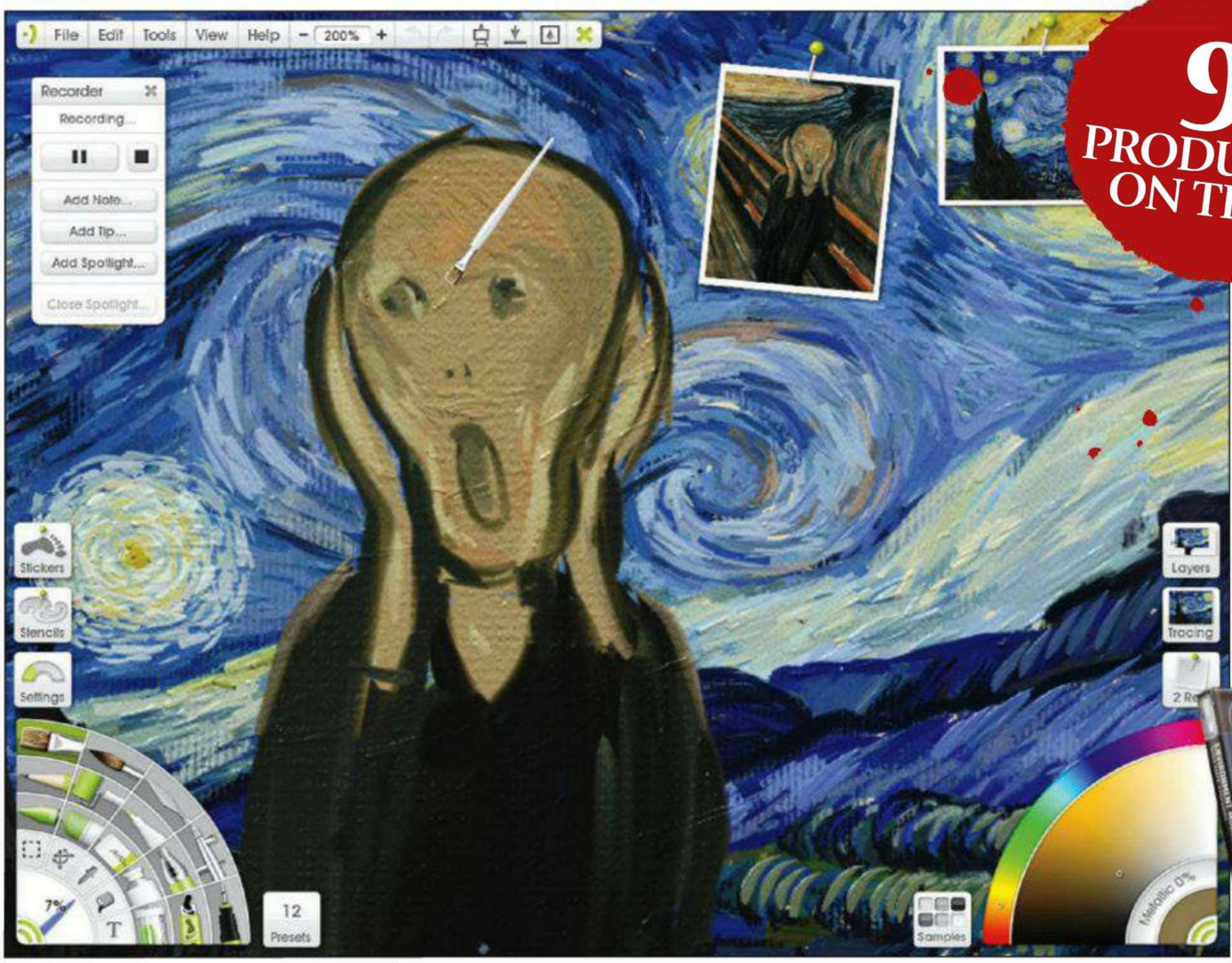
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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

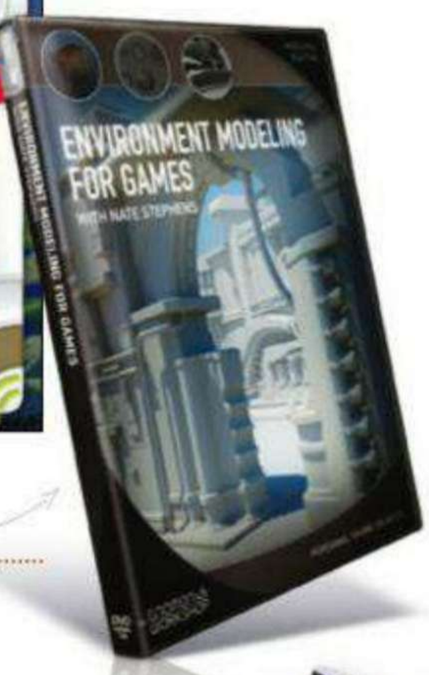
ImagineFX Reviews

Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

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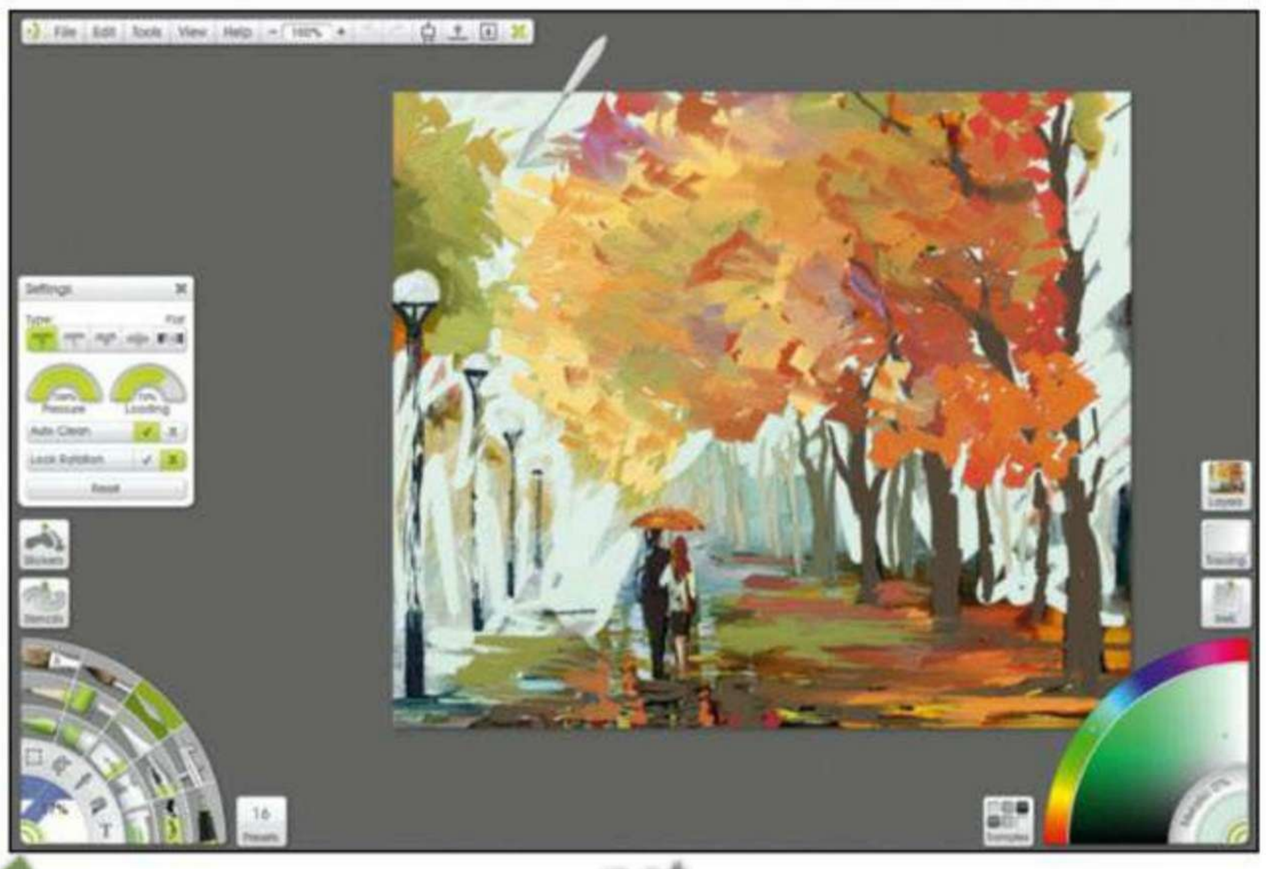
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ArtRage 3.5 Studio Pro

MAC & PC

TUNED UP A more responsive paint set and the ability to record every stroke headline this update to the natural media painting software

Price $80 **Company** Ambient Design **Web** artrage.com **Contact** contact@artrage.com



In ArtRage 3.5, you can load the Palette Knife with paint to apply it liberally on your canvas.

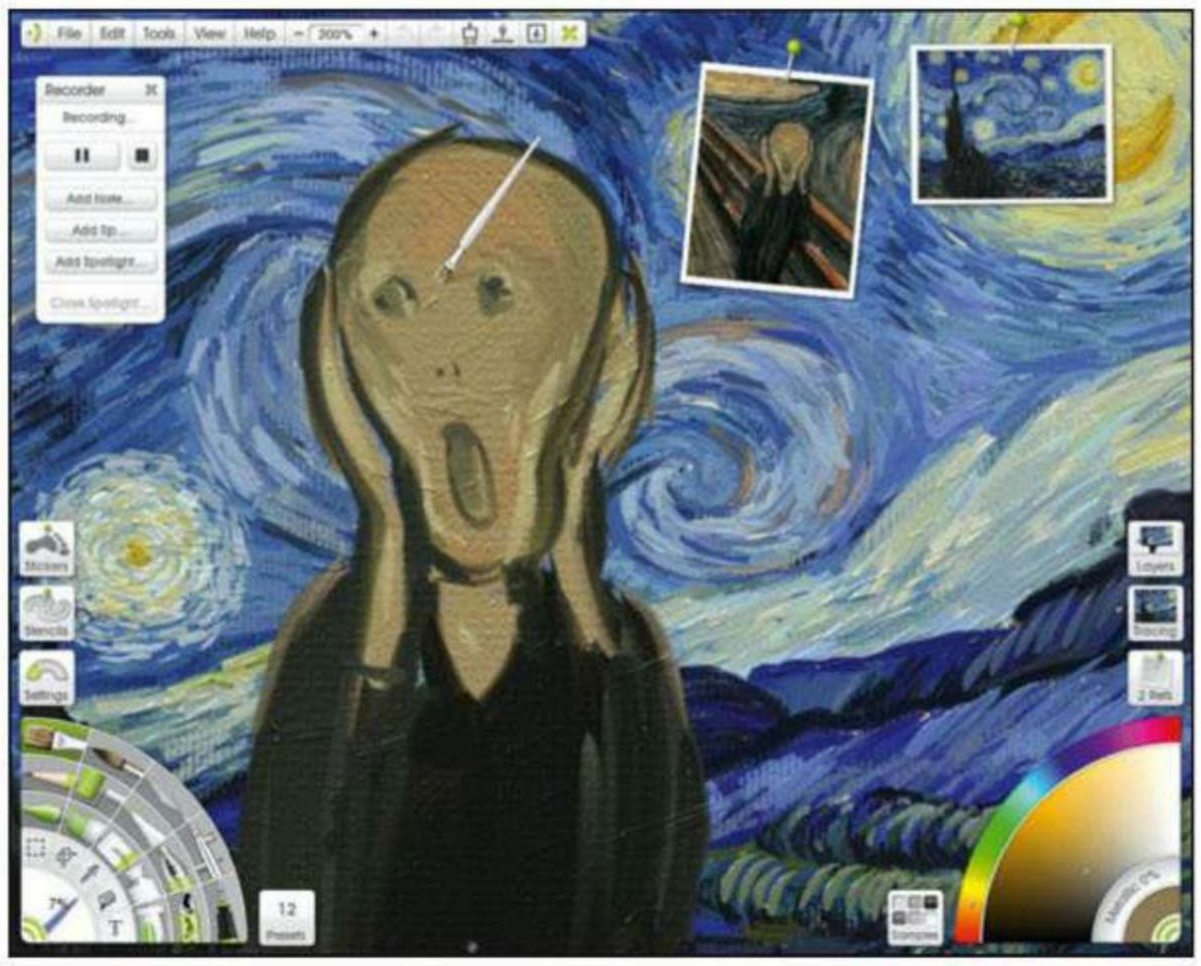
For this update to the popular natural media painting tool, the needs of the artist have given way to the cravings of the geek. ArtRage 3.5 Studio Pro features an array of fascinating technical changes, but there's only a minor impact on the brushes themselves.

The biggest addition is undoubtedly scripting, which enables you to take direct control over many of ArtRage's tools. Typically for Ambient Design, this is packaged in a thoroughly friendly way. For most people, the scripting tools are manifested simply as a recording system: just press Record, and ArtRage will store every brush selection and stroke you make, enabling you to review them later

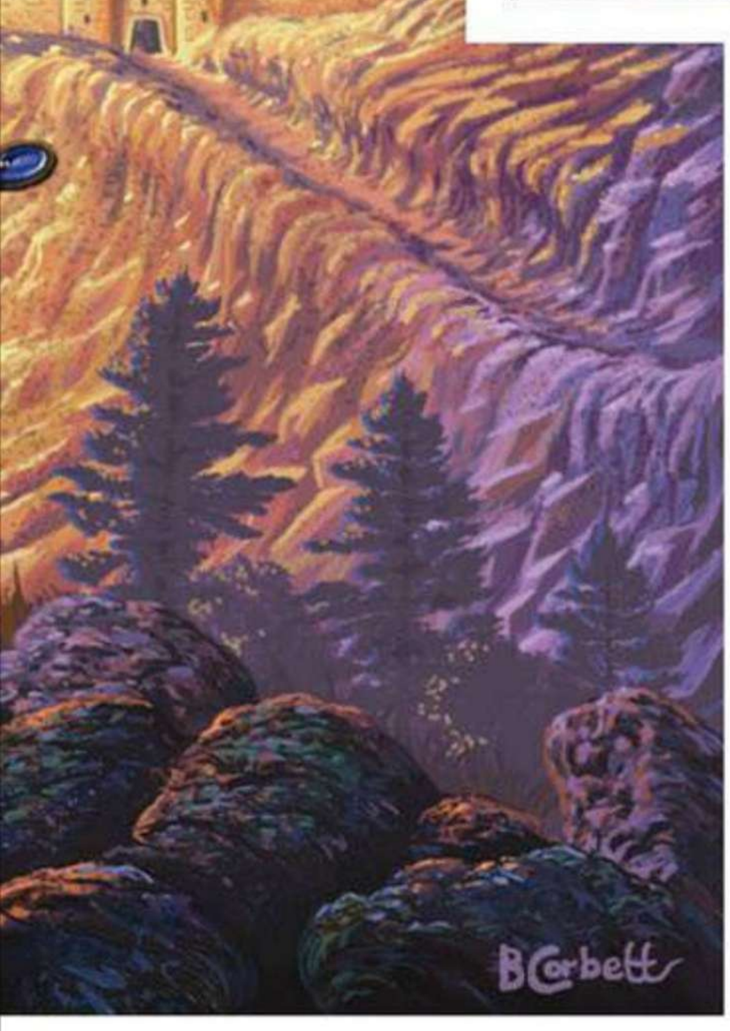
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Fantasy artist Bill Corbett finds that ArtRage recreates traditional media better than any other painting program.



This release features new ways of sharing your creativity and better responsiveness while painting.



or share them online. You can pause the recording at any point to add notes, too, making this a potentially great way to create tutorials.

However, the scripting system goes much further for those with proper geek credentials. You can open one of your scripts in a standard text editor, such as Notepad or TextEdit, and change history, tweaking the strength of a stroke or choosing a different brush retrospectively. You'll need to be comfortable with the idea of coding to exploit scripting in this way, but the creative possibilities are huge. Let's hope that Ambient Design is able to devise a more accessible control system in a future ArtRage release, so that the less technologically minded among us can also join in.

There's further potential for sharing with the addition of Package Files, an easy-to-use method for parcelling up stencils or presets and sending them to a friend. The recipient just needs to double-click the package and ArtRage takes care of the rest. (It's easy to remove a package later, too)

Ambient Design has also taken the opportunity to enhance some brushes in the new release. You can now load your Palette Knife with paint to smear across your canvas, while the airbrush gives you more control over splattering. And if you have a fairly new computer (one that's less than five years old, for example), then painting should feel a little more responsive thanks to ArtRage 3.5's support for multi-threading, which is the process where separate cores within a processor share the workload. The difference is most notable in areas such as blending colours, where the diffusion of hues feels smoother.

> **ArtRage 3.5 is everything that an interim update before the next major version of a program should be**

ArtRage 3.5 is everything that an interim update before the next major version should be. It all feels a little more polished and responsive, while Package Files and especially scripting point the way to an intriguing future of creating and sharing content.

DETAILS

Features

- Natural media painting tools
- Tablet-friendly controls
- Layers and blend modes
- Tracing paper
- Add reference images
- Share presets
- Record and share work sessions
- Edit recordings via scripting

System Requirements

PC: 1GHz processor, Windows XP/Vista/7, 512MB RAM

Mac: Intel processor, OS X 10.4, 512MB RAM

Rating

ARTIST INTERVIEW

BILL CORBETT

This fantasy artist uses ArtRage in nearly all his work

How do you use ArtRage?
I use ArtRage as the basis of most of my pictures, regardless of if I finish them in ArtRage or not. The dynamics of the Pencil tool are so natural that it feels like you're drawing with a real pencil instead of a Wacom pen.

What does ArtRage help you to achieve that would be difficult to do with other software?
ArtRage is the nearest thing (digitally) to traditional painting I've ever used. I haven't seen another program that produces better painterly results and it's the perfect tool for the more expressive artist who likes to shape their strokes on the virtual canvas.

Which tools in ArtRage do you appreciate the most?
The Paint Tube and the Oil Brush, in combination with the Palette Knife. I think they account for the majority of how I paint. I prefer this combination for a more authentic, traditional look.

What new tools in 3.5 have captured your imagination?
I love the new scripting playback tool. I've been messing around with it for my own pleasure, but I can see a lot of potential for it – especially when it comes to tutorials and workshops. Probably the best feature is the overall improvement in performance, especially with the paint blends.



Bill's fantasy art can often be found as part of our Q&A section.

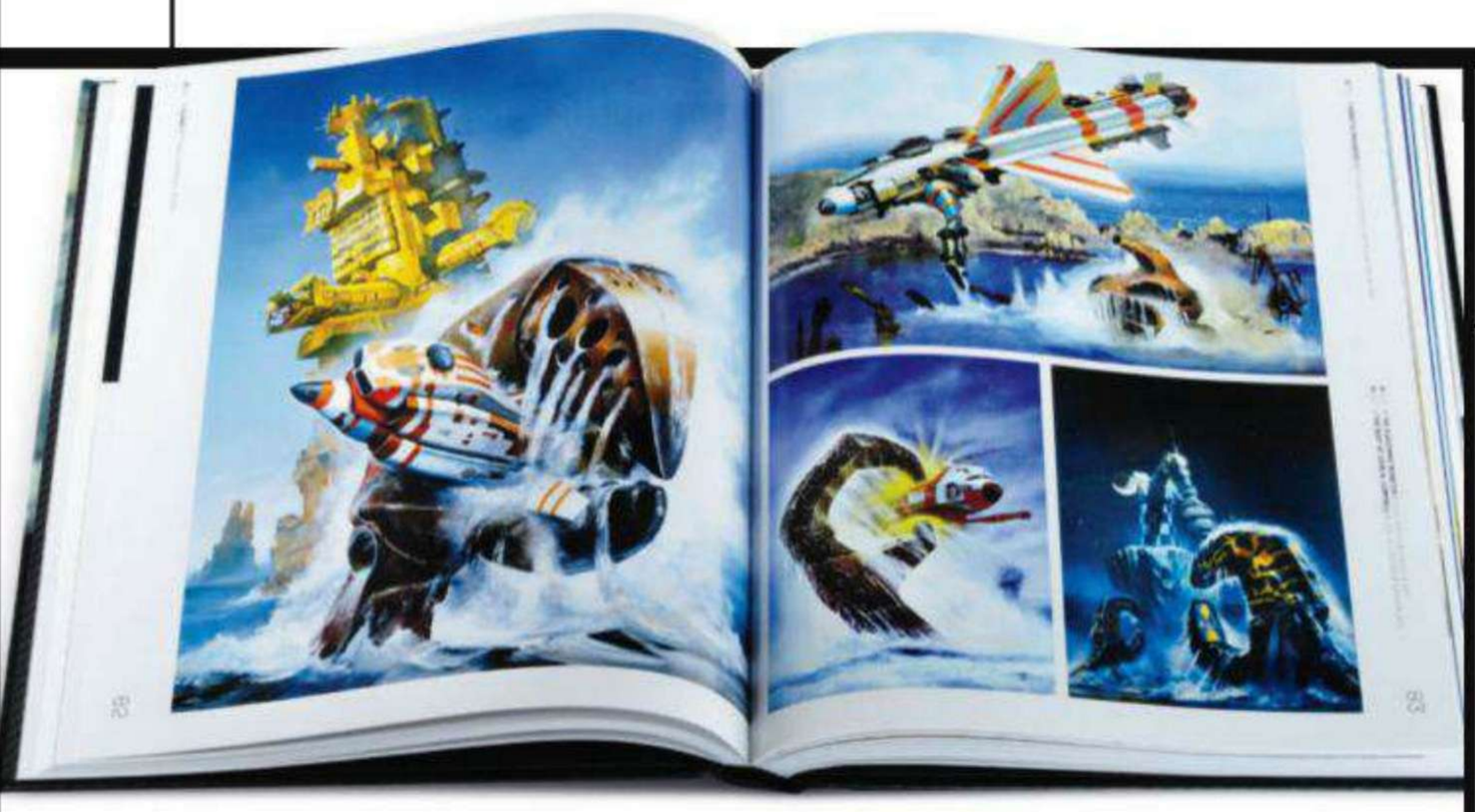


Bill has created artwork on a freelance basis since 1995. He paints for charities, businesses, bands, magazines and games.

billcorbett.co.uk

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Hardware: The Definitive SF Works of Chris Foss

DIARY OF A SPACEMAN Discover the groundbreaking and distinctive artwork of this prolific illustrator

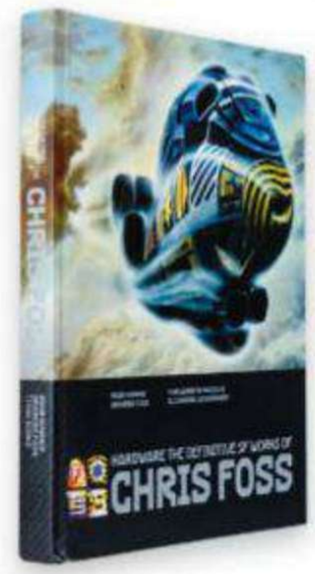
Author Chris Foss **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £25
Web titanbooks.com **Available** Now

This is a beautifully printed, hefty hardback that takes a look at the amazing career of a man who helped define sci-fi imagery in the 1970s, and has continued to do so ever since. The publishers have also clearly looked up the definition of 'definitive', collecting many classic images and a bevy of rare and never-before-seen ones, making it a seriously exciting treat for sci-fi fans.

Hardware opens with a two-page introduction from award-winning graphic designer Rian Hughes. This is followed by an interview with Imogene Foss, which offers a wonderful mini biography and an incredibly personal insight into her father Chris as a person as well as an artist.

That said, the highlight is the foreword from legendary comic-book artist Jean Giraud, aka Moebius. The short passage he provides, which includes an amazing (and somewhat unbelievable) story, gives the reader a real idea of the kind of man Foss is. So much so, it makes you wonder how many other stories could be told about this eccentric artist during his career.

Moving on to the real magic – the artwork. The book contains 220 pages of eye-catching, imagination-sparking and overwhelmingly inspiring images. Fans will already be familiar with some of them, most notably his illustrations for book covers in the 1970s for the likes of legendary sci-fi authors including Isaac Asimov, Arthur C Clarke and Philip K Dick.



It's hard to know how the layout for each page was chosen, because each piece of art is as good as the next, but it's been managed perfectly. The spreads leave you smiling and are worthy of the extra space, while the remaining pages are organised so well that they're easy to look at without getting a sense that they're cramped.

The description of every illustration is small and printed on each outer edge, so as not to distract from the image's brilliance. The only slight downside to this is that it's sometimes difficult to work out which image the text relates to on pages featuring more than two illustrations.

This book is the first comprehensive retrospective of Foss's work to date, which is one in a long list of reasons why every sci-fi lover should go out and buy it. Now.

RATING

Further reading...

Batman in fine detail and the imagery of five exceptional artists is showcased

Batman: Hush Unwrapped

Author Jeph Loeb
Publisher DC Comics **Price** £30
Available Now
RATING



Graphic novels don't normally grace our book review pages, but for this we decided to make an exception. If you're a fan of comic book legend Jim Lee's work all dressed in finished colour, then this version of Batman: Hush will blow you away. Jeph Loeb's classic Batman story appears here as you've never seen it before: raw and without ink, it offers a fascinating glimpse into the artistic process.

The book presents Jim's crisp pencil work for the first time, and goodness, what a form it is. Every page features intricate black-and-white detail, with only sound effects and Batman's internal narration in colour. These are seriously inspiring sketches for budding illustrators and professionals to pore over.

Flesk Prime Volume One

Author John Fleskes
Publisher Flesk Publications **Price** $25
Available Now
RATING

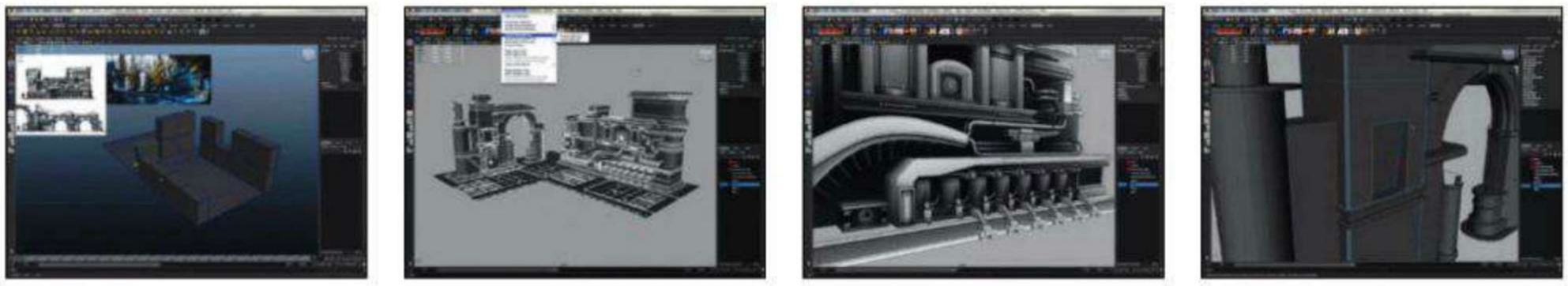


Five of the foremost illustrators working in the field today are showcased in this new addition to Flesk Publications' line of fine art books. Craig Elliott, Petar Meseldzija, Mark Schultz, William Stout and Gary Gianni handpicked their artwork, and have filled the pages with a diverse selection of images and mediums, making this an inspiring portfolio.

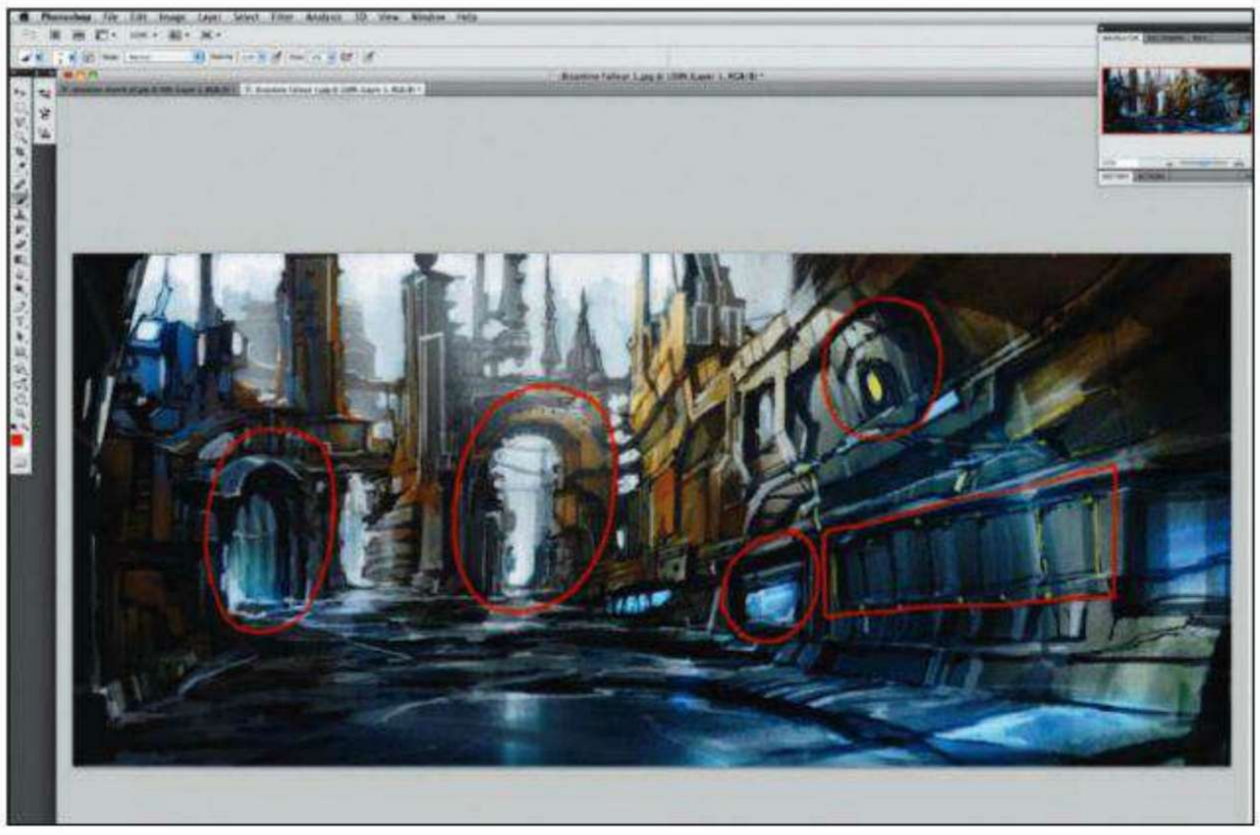
From the female form in oils to self-portraits using graphite on paper, the range of colours, paintings and sketches make this book a visual treat for any artist. The publisher has done a fantastic job in its presentation and the quality prints capture the lightest pencil lines and brush strokes of five remarkable artists.

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From blocking out to refining your forms, you'll learn how to design a game location with the player in mind.



If you've followed Cecil Kim's Environment Art Direction for Games workshop, these surroundings will look familiar. Nate helps you to identify key aspects of the concept art and turn the scene into a fully realised 3D environment in Maya.



Environment Modeling for Games

BLOCK PARTY Environment specialist Nate Stephens offers a workshop crammed with advice for creating your own 3D spaces

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** $59 **Format** DVD/Download **Web** thegnomonworkshop.com

Thanks to the rise of the level editor and online game designer communities, anyone with basic skills and some patience can create an environment for their favourite shoot-'em-up, and then invite the rest of the world in to play. However, there are few people who can do it quite as well as US-based artist Nate Stephens, who's created environments for some of the most epic games you've ever played.

His video on the art and craft of making a games-friendly location picks up where concept artist Cecil Kim's Gnomon release Environment Art Direction for Games (reviewed in ImagineFX issue 72) leaves off. Nate takes Cecil's painting of an industrial sci-fi setting and turns it into a 3D space that you can wander through, offering plenty of his own creative touches along the way.

Nate's composed narration takes you through substantial parts of a longer modelling process, from blocking out basic forms and shaping detail to an extensive overview of the technical checks necessary to make your model fit to pass along to your development team. A sequence on correcting the model to ensure even lighting is especially helpful. He uses Maya, but all of the principles and many of the tools used will apply to other major 3D applications.

It's Nate's commentary that sets this video apart from others covering similar ground. He channels his extensive experience into discussing only the most relevant techniques to the job at hand, and then backs it up by setting out some key game development principles. You'll see how to use your grid to enable all your pieces to fit together, why it's important to consider the player's viewing angle and much more. Nate's generous sharing of his knowledge will leave you feeling equipped to tackle your own environments.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Blocking out
- Key modelling tools
- Efficient use of components
- Prepping the model for lighting
- Testing your model

Length
229 minutes

Rating

ARTIST PROFILE

NATE STEPHENS

Nate has been working as an environment artist in the video game industry for over 10 years. He's become an expert in all disciplines, including modelling, texturing, animation and lighting, and has worked for companies such as Sony Santa Monica Studios and Blizzard Entertainment. Nate has been a driving force on games including God of War 3 and City of Heroes. He's currently environment artist at Respawn Entertainment, where he's working on the company's first, unannounced title.



respawn.com/company

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Cowboys and vampires fight it out in the visually impressive Priest.

Priest

BITING BACK It's man versus vampire in this beautifully designed but flimsy thriller based on the Korean comic

Distributor Sony **Certificate** 15 **Price** £18 (£23 Blu-ray) **Available** Now

Cowboys pitted against vampires in a post-apocalyptic wasteland that's as much Blade Runner as it is Billy the Kid, Priest is a mix of the good, the bad and the ugly that puts creative visuals ahead of dialogue and depth.

What works about Priest is the conviction to follow through on the idea. The world created by Scott Stewart, who also directed the 2010 supernatural-horror title Legion, doesn't hold back on embracing the Western genre. Time is spent allowing the camera to linger on the landscape; Stewart explores ancient statues and abandoned cities like John Ford did in Texas.

In many ways, Priest is The Searchers, by way of Min-Woo Hyung's imaginative comic and Richard Fitzgerald's evocative production design. So, vampires replace the Comanche, while Paul Bettany's worn-down vampire hunter stands in for John Wayne on the search for the kidnapped niece of a local sheriff.



However, where Ford allowed his characters room to grow, Stewart just wants them to get to the next slow-mo gunfight as quickly as possible. But with bikes designed by the excellent Patrick Faulwetter, at least they look good getting there.

Although Karl Urban (perhaps best known for his role as Bones in the rebooted Star Trek) tries to bring some camp fun to his role of vamp cowboy Black Hat, Priest is a film caught in the middle of its own expectations. Is it a sci-fi epic with a message or a dumb action flick with beautiful production design? The answer is somewhere in between.

There's some fun to be had with the extras, though – which include a look at manufacturing Faulwetter's impressive bike designs – and alongside the regular Blu-ray release the film is available in Blu-ray 3D for £28. But as visually arresting as Priest is, you're always searching for more substance.

RATING

Also look at...

A bloodthirsty epic and Buffy's return to the screen in motion comic form



13 Assassins

Distributor Artificial Eye
Certificate 15
Price £16 (£20 Blu-ray)
Available Now
RATING

Famed for the meditative sadism in films such as Audition and Ichi the Killer, Takashi Miike settles his unflinching eye for the grotesque in the context of an action epic in 13 Assassins.

It's the mid 19th century and the sun of the Samurai age is setting. With the spoilt, bored and utterly deadly Lord Naritsugu threatening the peace of Japan's future, a group of masterless Rõnin are given one last mission – to assassinate him. The film explores the honour-driven culture of the Samurai in the action-packed language of the Hollywood blockbuster. The director mixes snatches of Naritsugu's despicable behaviour with sporadic sword fights to build up to an impressive level of tension.

Yet the 45-minute battle finale blossoms into an absurd spectacle. The relentless bloodbath bludgeons any compassion out of the viewer and we're left with a heavy-handed morality tale that takes the fun out of the action.



Buffy Season 8: Motion Comic

Distributor 20th Century Fox
Certificate 15
Price £16
Available 3 October
RATING

The decision to continue the Buffy TV series as a comic book sent fans into a frenzy in 2007. Even though creator Joss Whedon returned to write Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season 8, many still demanded a TV show.

In some ways, this DVD release appeases fans who want to watch and not read their heroine's continued fight against the Big Bad. Compiling the first 19 issues of the 40-issue run into motion comic format, Buffy Season 8 is a fun and often effective watch. The stiffly animated scenes work well, with sound effects and music bringing Georges Jeanty's art to life. Unlike other motion comics, Jeanty's clean, stylised art fits the format perfectly.

The disc contains some fun extras, too, such as a gallery of Jo Chen's impressive covers and a version of the Tooncast software complete with artwork, sound effects and vocal samples to make your own Buffy motion comic from the assets available.

However, being neither a comic nor a TV series it's hard to justify the price tag of this motion comic version of Whedon's franchise. One for die-hard fans only.

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Your makeshift mêlée weapons will eventually break, often at the worst possible moment.

Dead Island

MEAT FEAST With this zombie thriller, Polish developer Techland brings the undead to life in all their gory detail

Format PC, PS3, Xbox 360 **Publisher** Deep Silver
Price £50 **Available** Now **Web** www.deadislandgame.com

When a holiday resort in Papua New Guinea is consumed by a zombie outbreak, four misfits immune to the virus must club together to aid vulnerable survivors.

This is a holiday from hell in the truest sense. In the same way that EA's Dead Space team played with goat carcasses and studied medical photos to research their gore, Techland's artists pored over real-world catastrophes to forge their zombie massacre – and not always willingly.

The results are effective. It's hard not to be taken aback by the sight of a man cradling his lost wife while shin-deep in a bloodied swimming pool. The art team has managed that rare feat of personalising dead meat, imbuing their zombies with hints of backstories, just enough to make you reconsider gouging them – that is, until they spring for your throat.

That the snacked-on cadavers clearly carry far deeper wounds than freshly killed bodies is a testament to the detail that's gone towards making each body tell its own story. Despite the thousands of them on display, corpses display unique combinations of wounds and attire.

Special zombie types bring extra dimensions into play, with each new breed sporting distinct physical features and attack attributes fully showcased with depth-of-field techniques. All the while, your scavenged weapons will shatter and shear with alarming regularity. It may not be realistic to watch meat cleavers split after a few attacks, but the exaggerated weapon degradation is an integral part of the game's looting mechanics.



Ultimately, Dead Island's biggest character is the location itself. The juxtaposition of a colourful paradise beach resort and pitch-black, battered indoor settings makes for a compelling adventure.

Light and dark interplay is an exceedingly effective tool: moving from the saturated vistas into boarded-up buildings teeming with monsters who know to avoid your torchlight provides horror thrills not experienced since Left 4 Dead 2.

RATING



ARTIST INTERVIEW

WOJCIECH OSTRYCHARZ

The Techland concept artist on how to reanimate a genre's look

What were the team's influences?
We were inspired by the horror classics among the many movies and games that have a zombie theme. But in view of the zombie world evolving significantly in the more contemporary productions, such as the movie 28 Days Later or the Left 4 Dead games, the zombies became faster and more dangerous, which gave us more possibilities.

How would you describe Dead Island's art style?
We wanted the art to be lively, expressive and pleasant by means of the lighting and colours, but at the same time post-apocalyptic, and terror and anxiety inspiring.

What are the golden rules of good character design?
Finding their characteristic features so the viewer remembers them easily and has no difficulty associating them with a particular game. The visual attractiveness is important, too, although it's often the case that I like something but I can't recall where I've seen it, which doesn't make for a good effect. In case of the zombies in Dead Island, it was crucial to differentiate their appearance from other approaches that have already been taken in previous games and films.

What's your design process?
Each concept artist has their own work process. In my case, the draft sketch is most often prepared with a pencil and a paper sheet. Then I add colour and polish using Photoshop. It's easier for me to show the idea legibly on paper and then present the atmosphere and detail using Photoshop tools. The most important part of the process is the idea – I never start working without it. To come up with something interesting, I look for inspiration outside the genre. One can get a nice, fresh idea looking in areas that's far removed from the theme.



Wojciech has been a concept artist at Techland for over three years. Before this, he designed games for mobile platforms.

wojciechostrycharz.blogspot.com

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LOCATION London, England **RECENT PROJECT** Pirates of the Caribbean: Armada of the Damned E3 trailer **WEB** slidelondon.com



Slide's R&D in character design systems has resulted in Qev, a high-end game character that the studio describes as a cyber-chav.



Slide

PEOPLE POWER Behind the scenes with a studio that specialises in creating characters for game developers

For some game developers, the Holy Grail is to create an experience where you feel like you're playing a movie. To achieve this, in-game characters need to be as compelling and believable as possible. In 2007, Etienne Jabbour and Robin Deitch spotted this and decided that maybe they could start a creative studio catering to game developers who want superior characters.

At first, they weren't sure it would work out, so they launched as a general CG studio. But soon customers were calling for Slide's character skills and the studio found its niche. Etienne explains: "There was a growing market for a team which could deliver both the artistic and technical know-how to bring a range of characters to life, including everything from cartoon to photo-real styles. We took the plunge, relaunched as a character-only production studio and Slide in its current form was born."



Etienne believes that the company's key assets are artistic and technical ability, and its understanding of a game's design

Cartoony Eek is practically a rubberised character. It's from the more expressive end of the slide portfolio.



Slide's artists took Bonnie from a hi-res illustration and created this version of her, which is ready to be used in real-time game graphics.

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ARTIST INTERVIEW

TOM PARKER

Character artist and modeller Tom talks about working at Slide



PROJECTS 20 characters for a PS3 release this year, 16 characters for a multiplatform release in 2012

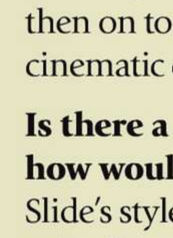
What skills do artists at Slide need to have?
We need to be able to get a good high-level idea of what the character is about, in terms of style and aesthetic. That's not only knowing how to make a sci-fi or fantasy character look cool, but having the ability to put love and attention into what could otherwise be a man on the street to make him stand out.

What's the challenge for an artist at the company?
Every character we create has to impress and hit the brief. There are no secondary or less important characters in our eyes, and so we always have to put 100 per cent into our work.

Do you get to work across a variety of projects as part of your job?
Yes, for sure. It's one of the best things about working for Slide. From one project to another we can go from a hyper-real sci-fi project to working on a stylised game, and then on to creating a photo-real cinematic character.

Is there a certain Slide style and how would you describe it?
Slide's style can be summed up as a mix of great observation and design combined with high fidelity. We focus on form and silhouette at the start of a character and over the course of production move into realising convincing detail, whether on faces, clothing or accessories.

Of the many different things that Slide is involved in, what kind of projects do you prefer working on?
I enjoy working on characters that push me as an artist. I'm always looking to learn and improve on my craft, and when a character turns up that requires me to come out of my comfort zone it puts a huge smile on my face. So in short, any project that challenges me.



Before freelancing for Slide as a character artist for games and films, Tom was a leading VFX artist at Climax.

tomparkersartdump.wordpress.com



© Disney Interactive / Axis Animation

Here, Slide has focused on a costume, used for a cinematic trailer for Disney's new Pirates of the Caribbean game.

workflow. In addition to in-game graphics, it's geared towards providing illustrations for advertising and marketing materials, as well as characters for cutscene animations.

As Etienne points out, in-house game artists can get bogged down with their company's development pipeline. "We're set up to work at the cutting edge," he says, "which means our clients benefit from the efficiencies and advantages provided by the latest tools and tech without having to invest time and money in these themselves. Early on, we decided to maintain a strong research and development (R&D) side to the company."

> **"We're set up to work at the cutting edge, so our clients benefit from the advantages provided by the latest tools"**

Its recent projects include characters for the E3 trailer to the upcoming Disney release, Pirates of the Caribbean: Armada of the Damned – and for senior artist Samar Vijay, sculpting characters for Assassin's Creed 2 has been a highlight. "I focus on sculpting, mostly," he says. "However, I can end up working on anything from a realistic contemporary character to an entirely made-up sci-fi or fantasy character from one project to another. It does require a degree of flexibility, but it keeps things fresh and interesting, which is great for an artist."





Slide's artists created this demo character for the portfolio to demonstrate a less-realistic style.

As for the future, Etienne has noticed that clients now want to get Slide involved in projects earlier on. This way, the look of the characters can be developed in stages alongside the game itself, from 2D concepts to in-progress models and on to marketing artwork.

He says: "We've always been vocal about the benefits of doing models in 3D from the start. Apps such as ZBrush allow for very quick iteration while experimenting with form, proportion, colour and finer details such as heads and faces. More iteration gets you closer and closer to a final result in 3D."



Created for Headstrong Games, this character is detailed right down to his ageing armour and his stubble.

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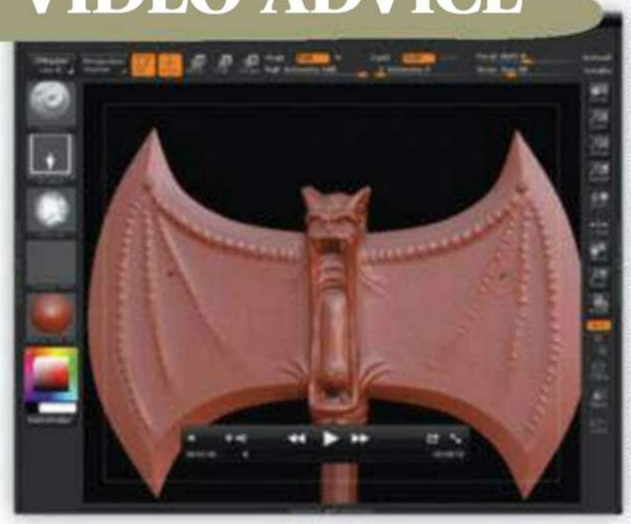
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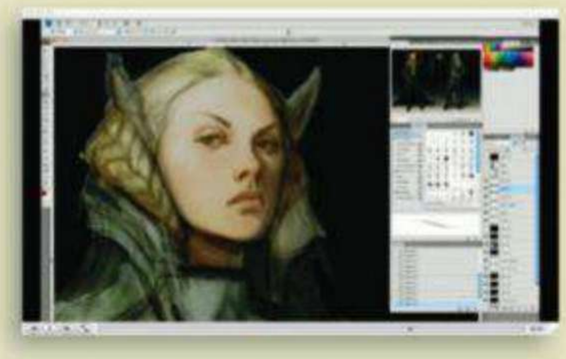
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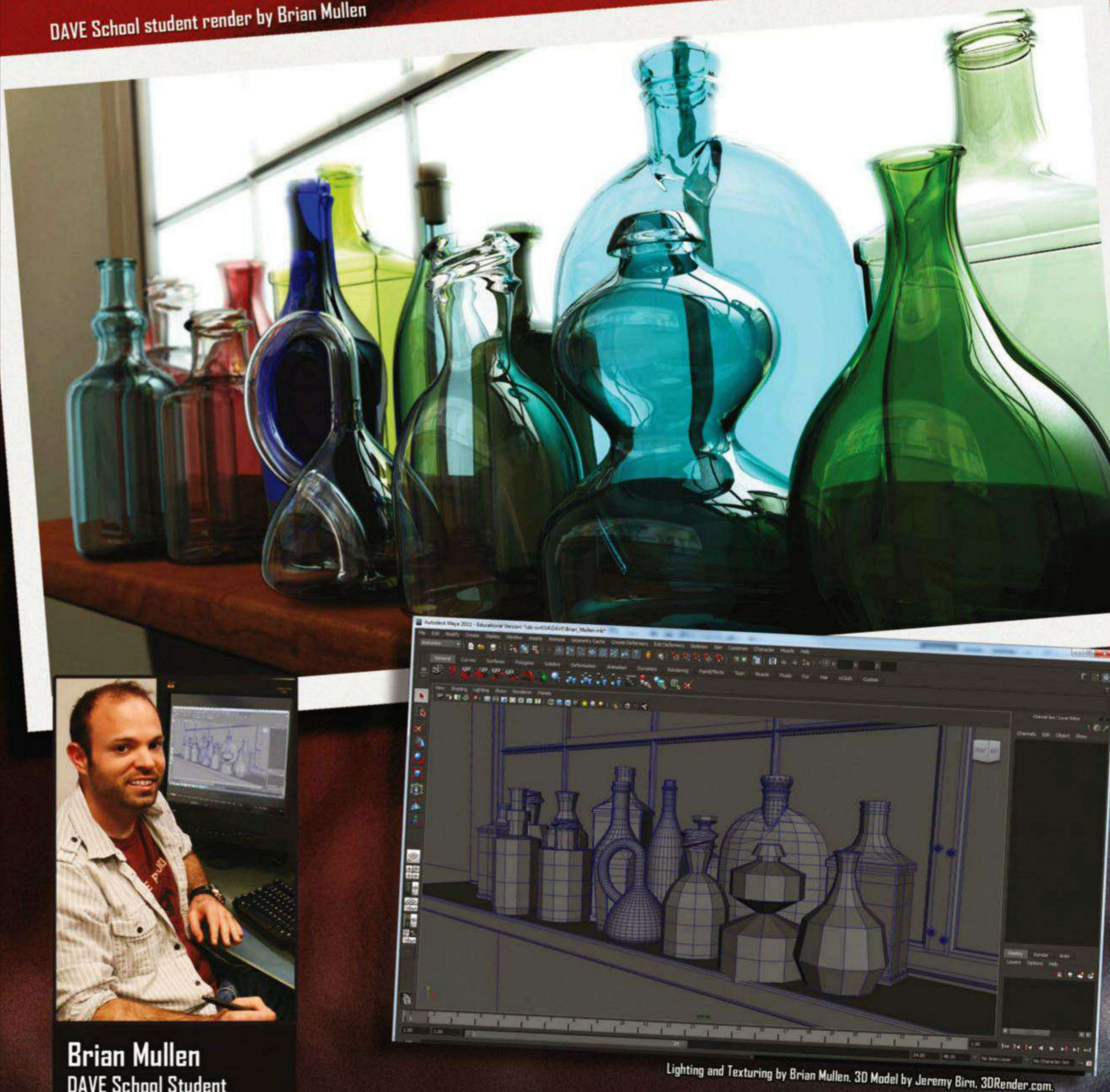
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